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FOR THE WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 24, 1887.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["MR. PALMER," LADY EMILY SAID, "I CAN SEE FROM YOUR MANNER YOU THINK THERE HAS BEEN AN ACCIDENT!"]

NOEL LORD ARDEN.

CHAPTER VIII.

TRUSCOT PALMER was not what people call a bad man, or, to speak more correctly, he did not intend to be so; but from early youth he had never placed the least constraint on his wishes and inclination. With him to desire a thing meant to have it, supposing its possession within the limits of possibility.

He was not a popular man with his own sex, but many women liked him; he knew so well how to hide his foibles from their eyes, and there was such a touch of masterfulness about him which took their fancy.

He had hosts of acquaintances, but few real friends; and though he had had a succession of love affairs from the time he left school he had never known what love really meant until he met Nell Briarley.

It was not clear even to himself what he first meant to come out of that meeting. From the moment he met her in the woods round Milby he loved her.

He was captivated by her sweet, flower-tinted face, and yet more by the utter unconsciousness with which she received his attentions. To the *blond* man of the world her innocent simplicity was refreshing.

His passion was fanned by her resistance into a flame, and the acquaintance began by him merely to while away an idle hour ended by becoming the strongest feeling of his nature.

He knew she did not love him—was perfectly aware that he owed her reluctant acceptance of his suit only to her anxiety about her mother; but this did not daunt him. He made discreet inquiries, and found that Mrs. Briarley was in very delicate health, and it was hardly probable she would live long.

This exactly fitted in with Mr. Palmer's arrangements. Publicly engaged to Lady Charlotte Maitland he could not outrage public opinion by marrying Nell openly.

His idea was a secret wedding, after which his young wife could live under her mother's care in Devonshire until such time as he was able to break with his middle-aged fiancée. To do him justice bigamy never entered into his plans.

He had run through a great deal of property, and now only possessed the old Manor House, and an income under a thousand, which, to a man of his taste, meant poverty. To marry openly a penniless bride, and take her into society was not to be thought of; but Lady Charlotte was exacting and imperious. Given time, he could easily so aggravate her self-love that she would break off the engagement herself, where all the blame of the rupture would fall on her shoulders; and he could pose as the injured party, without letting the world into the secret that all the while he possessed a beautiful young wife hidden in distant Devonshire.

Nell was such a child still her beauty would only gain development and maturity in a few years' seclusion, and if he could only keep in with an irascible old uncle who was known to have very heavy money-bags, the chances were that before Mrs. Palmer was five-and-twenty he should be able to introduce her to Balgravia, with a staff of servants, carriages, horses, jewels, and French dresses, all of which he deemed essential to his wife's *début* in society.

It was a selfish scheme—cruelly hard and

unjust to Lady Charlotte—deceitful and time-serving to the old uncle; and if it wronged Nell less than anybody, it was only because the man had learned to love her so passionately; he could not have brought himself to harm her.

He never looked on it as an injury to bind her for life to a man seventeen years her senior. It never seemed to him a cruelty to win her lifelong companionship by working on her love for her mother.

He made his plans admirably during that brief absence from Milby; ran down to Devonshire, and took a pretty furnished cottage in quite a different part of the county from Charford, and where he was quite unknown. He then paid a duty visit to Lady Charlotte, and promised to meet her at her mother-in-law's in October, when all the arrangements for their wedding could be definitely made.

He contrived by his coolness to make his elderly fiancée remarkably angry, but outwardly he played the rôle of disinterested lover so well that pretty Mrs. Maitland confided to her husband he was a great deal too good for Charlotte, and if the Captain could hardly endorse an opinion so prejudicial to his sister he did remark, "Palmer was a far nicer fellow than he had expected. He improved marvellously on acquaintance;" so that Truscot had succeeded beyond his hopes when he set out on his return journey to Milby.

He had taken care during his stay in London to take rooms in a very remote part of London, and to give notice of his marriage to the district registrar, so that the very day of Nell's arrival in the great metropolis she could become his wife. Everything had gone without a hitch, and he had but one more difficulty to encounter—Mrs. Briarley.

He was undecided whether he had better see the lady and win her over to his side, or take Nell away first, and then write from London, saying she was his wife, and inviting the mother to join them—say, in ten days' time—in Devonshire. After all, this was only a matter of detail. No woman possessed of her senses, living in poverty at Loch Cottage, would refuse such a splendid offer for her daughter; for though Mr. Palmer was desperately in love, he was just the man to remember all he could give a wife, and really regarded himself as a sort of modern Cophetua and Nell as an ideal beggar-maid.

To Truscot's mind he was doing a very generous thing by marrying a penniless girl of no particular parentage—he who came of a fine old family, and could hold his own with the loftiest names in Devonshire. If any one had presumed to tell him Nell's beauty was a more than equal exchange for all he had to offer, he would have thought the rash speaker had gone entirely out of his senses.

The meeting with Noel and Lord Brabourne was not a pleasant incident. The allusions to Lady Charlotte were decidedly inconvenient; but then, as Mr. Palmer reflected, the friends were going to Scotland, and that country and Devonshire lay very far apart. It was hardly likely they would discover the charming rural paradise he meant to make in Devonshire after a brief ceremony at Lambeth.

He had never called at Loch Cottage, and though Nell was his promised wife he had never made a written appointment with her. They met at first by accident, when he had been lucky enough to rescue her from the fury of a mad dog. Then he found out she often walked on the cliff and in the woods close at hand. It had come at last to his seeing her every day; but yet he could never remember deliberately asking her to meet him. However, the thing must be done now, or how would she know of his return! He must either write a few lines, telling her he wished to see her, or else call boldly at the cottage.

He was sitting over his dinner, wondering which course would be best. The daylight was fading gradually; a rosy reflection from the setting sun fell on the water. It was almost too late for Nell to come out, and yet how sweet it would be for him to stand with

her on the cliff and watch the moon rise slowly over the sea! Yes, why should he deny himself the pleasure? In former days he never wrote to Nell lest their correspondence should get abroad and make people busy with her name; but now that before the week was out she would be his wife, there was no further need of caution.

The note was very short. A brief request for an interview—that was all. He addressed it, and called a waiter.

"Take that over to Loch Cottage at once, you need not wait for an answer."

He was turning away when he noticed the bewildered look on the man's face, and saw he had something to say.

"Surely, you know the place?" inquired Mr. Palmer, a little irritably; "the cottage by the cliff."

"I know it perfectly, sir. My sister lived with Mrs. Briarley for years. But the cottage is quite empty now, sir. I believe it's let, but the people haven't moved in yet."

It was Truscot's time to look bewildered now. Had his beggar-maid proved faithless? Had he actually been jilted by a rustic hoyden?

"Mrs. Briarley was seriously ill when I left Milby," he condescended to explain. "Surely she must have recovered very suddenly to move."

The man looked uncomfortable.

"Was you a friend of hers, sir?"

"That is my business," returned Truscot, haughtily. "Answer my question. Where is she now?"

The waiter scratched his head reflectively, as though the magnitude of the question oppressed him. At last he said,—

"I couldn't take on myself to tell, sir. I never see Mrs. Briarley myself, but Sarah says she was as kind-hearted a lady as you'd wish to see, so we'll hope she's gone to the right place, sir, if only for the poor young lady's sake."

The truth dawned on Mr. Palmer slowly.

"You don't mean to say she's dead?"

"Just that, sir. That was why I made bold to ask if you was a friend of hers. I didn't want the news to come to you too sudden like. She died very soon after you left."

"And her daughter?"

"Miss Nell. She paid up what little was owing, and went to London. Sarah did tell her she hoped to meet a friend there, though how she could have friends in London, seeing she had lived here all her life, baffles me!"

Truscot decided she had gone to herself. Well-nigh heart-broken at her mother's death she had turned to the only other creature on whose love she could depend. He knew she was profoundly ignorant of the world and its ways. How should a girl who had lived at Milby all her days know the impossibility of tracing anyone in London unless you know their exact address?

He was touched to the heart by this mark of her confidence in him. Poor little Nell! Hastily reclaiming his letter from the waiter, he said affably,—

"I suppose your sister is living in Milby?"

"She's staying with us, sir, till she finds another place."

"I should like to see her, and ask her a few questions. This news has upset me very much."

"Sarah shall step up to-night, sir. I'll send her word. She'd be proud to do anything for any friend of Mrs. Briarley; she thought a lot of her."

But Sarah proved a disappointment. She was a respectably-attired young woman, and said frankly she had lived with Mrs. Briarley for three years. Her mistress was never very strong, and since the bank failed she sank rapidly. The cause of her death was disease of the lungs, as the doctor said.

"But you don't agree with him?" remarked Mr. Palmer, who was quick to understand the toss of the head which accompanied the words.

"I don't, sir. In my opinion, Mrs. Briarley

just fretted herself to death. She never moved beyond the garden; she never opened a book or wrote a letter; she was one of the sweetest-spoken ladies I ever saw, but I know she had had some awful trouble."

"And she was poor, I know that much. Tell me, you don't think poverty hastened her death?"

"I am sure it didn't, sir," said Sarah, quickly. "She had an income that was more than enough for her wants, and though, through some bank failing, it stopped, she had plenty for some months."

"But when that was gone?"

"I don't know; but I am quite sure she never feared poverty. Miss Nell would wish sometimes to be rich, but the mistress never. I don't believe she ever gave a thought to money, nor Miss Nell either till her mamma was ill."

"And where is Miss Nell now?"

"She went to London, sir."

"Your brother thought she had friends there to whom she was going?"

Sarah shook her head scornfully.

"She hadn't a friend in the world, poor, dear young lady! She went to London because she was so persecuted. She couldn't bear to stay here, that's the truth, and I'm not ashamed of saying it if that crabbed old man were vicar of Milby ten times over."

"But what had the vicar to do with it?"

"Why, if it hadn't been for him, it's my belief Miss Nell 'ld be here now. He sent her away."

"He couldn't."

"He poked his dark, ugly face in while the mistress was in her coffin. I know he was no true friend to my young lady, so I took care to hear every word he said, and when he'd finished I should uncommonly have liked to shake him. Any way, he'll never get me to listen to his sermons again, the old scoundrel!"

"But what did he say?"

"He told Miss Nell she and her mother had been a disgrace to Milby; and when she opened her eyes, poor little thing, as though she couldn't understand him (while she didn't any more than if he'd talked Greek) he made it a little plainer, said he'd known the mistress in her young days, and that she was no more Mrs. Briarley than I am, and Miss Nell was nobody's daughter!"

Truscot Palmer's teeth gnashed in impotent fury.

Mr. Grenison would have stared badly had the young man's desires been granted.

"And he is a clergyman?"

"Well," returned Sarah, "Miss Nell, she went about with a white face and heavy eyes. She wouldn't look at anything, or seem to heed what I said to her. After the funeral she went to see the landlord, and he gave her money for the things as they stood. Then she paid up every farthing they owed in the place, made me a present (which I was loth to take), and told me she was going to London."

"And you think she went?"

"I know she did," returned the abigail, "for I went, myself with the boxes to the station and saw them directed. I did hear after she missed the train, and went on from Foxgrove instead of Milby; but I know she went."

Truscot Palmer gave the woman a handsome *douceur* and dismissed her. He could not comfort himself now with the thought Nell had gone to him in her trouble; she had simply fled from everything connected with her past life. She had never loved him, and though she had been willing to marry him for her mother's sake, she was glad of her freedom; or, perhaps, she thought that, being nameless, she had no right to expect the fulfilment of his promise.

The next day Mr. Palmer made a few inquiries at the railway station. The boxes had duly arrived, but the young lady had missed the train.

The boxes had been sent on to Foxgrove, there to be despatched by slow goods train,

but their owner had reclaimed them there the next day, and took them with her to London.

The ticket collector could remember her perfectly. There was an accident to the train about half-way up, and two men were killed, but Miss Briarley's name did not appear in the list of injured; and, indeed, most of the passengers escaped unhurt.

Mr. Palmer paid his bill and left the hotel. He had nothing to gain by staying longer at Milby. His own impression and all the information he could glean alike pointed to London as Nell's dwelling-place, and, therefore, to London he directed his steps.

He was seriously handicapped in his search by the fact of his engagement to Lady Charlotte. He was obliged, perforce, to pay others to do the work he would gladly have undertaken, and he did spend a heavy sum in feeling private detectives, inquiry offices, and such-like; but a month flew by, and left him no nearer his desires.

Urgent letters began to come from Lady Charlotte, and at last it seemed to Truscot really wiser to go down, to Thorpe and bring about the rupture which he wished for only second to discovering Nell.

He had told Mrs. Maitland he could not go to Hampshire for a few days; but he changed his mind, and set out the very morning of Nell's journey, only by a later train.

It was a surprise to him to find the Rector's pony-carriage waiting at the station, and Lady Emily herself sitting in it with rather a perturbed face.

"Mr. Palmer, is it possible?"

"I was going to ask you that," he returned, lightly. "May I flatter myself you came to meet me?"

"I had not the least idea you were coming. The Rector is here, too. He has just gone to speak to the station-master."

"I hope nothing is the matter?"

"Nothing much. Only we are such methodical people, anything out of the beaten track alarms us. I was expecting my governess by the train before this. In fact, we have been waiting here nearly two hours. Charlotte will be furious. I mean," suddenly, conscious it was hardly prudent to speak so plainly of her sister's temper before her future husband, "she would have been dreadfully anxious. Of course, your coming will put everything else out of her thoughts."

Truscot shook his head.

"I fear not. I am terribly in disgrace. I sometimes fear," thinking it politic to begin his *role* at once, "your sister has repented her decision, and wishes for her freedom."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Lady Emily, with more assurance than was needful, as she felt what a cruel blow it would be to her if Charlotte, even with her fortune, were once more left on her hands. "I am certain you are mistaken. Ah! here comes my husband!"

"My dear," said Mr. Brabazon, gravely, when he had shaken hands with Mr. Palmer, "I fear there is some mistake. She has evidently not come by this train; and the guard declares there was no lady waiting at Marford. Perhaps some accident prevented her reaching Mrs. Maitland's yesterday."

Truscot interposed,

"I called on Mrs. Maitland last night, and she mentioned to me a young lady had just arrived who was coming to you to-day. I had no hope then of being able to get away so soon myself, or I should have offered my services as escort. Mrs. Maitland did not mention the young lady's name, but I expect it was the same."

"Undoubtedly," said the Rector; "but, if so, what hindered her coming?"

"She may have missed the train."

"So we thought, therefore we waited for this one; there is no other in to-night. Mrs. Maitland is so exact in all things I fancy she would have telegraphed had anything serious occurred."

"Why not telegraph to her?" suggested Mr. Palmer, and you will have your anxiety

set at rest. If she is at home you can get a reply to-night."

The advice was acted on, the message despatched, and the little party set off for the Rectory. Lady Emily and her husband, with the tact and thoughtfulness only found in really high-bred people, affected to dismiss the matter entirely from their thoughts, and spoke only of Lady Charlotte and the approaching wedding.

"I should like to be married soon," said Mr. Palmer, forgetting to add that he desired to substitute another bride for Lady Charlotte; "we might spend some time in Paris, and then come home for Christmas."

"Charlotte is very fond of Paris."

"Yes," chimed in the Rector, who always agreed with his wife, "Lady Charlotte is just one of those women who shine in society. I expect the Manor will become noted for its hospitality before long."

Mr. Brabazon was thankful at the arrival of his destined brother-in-law, for Truscot's repeated delay had made Lady Charlotte's temper very trying to the Rectory folk; but, simple couple that they were, Lady Emily and her husband never reflected that at forty a *fiancé* likes to devote a little time to her toilet before receiving her betrothed. Lady Emily had married at twenty, and never needed rice powder and bloom of Ninon to enhance her charms. Lady Charlotte was devoted to both, and certainly would not like to be caught by Mr. Palmer in the hideous dressing-gown which a severe fear fit of tooth-ache had reduced her to donning soon after her sister started.

The children had had a bad time of it that afternoon, and their nurse a worse. Lady Charlotte could not be persuaded to retire to bed; she would sit in the drawing-room, surrounded by hot flannels, fomentations, poultices, and every other remedy known or procurable. Her thin hair was fastened carelessly in a wisp, the complexion was for once as nature made it, her figure in the before-mentioned dressing-gown was perfectly unrecognizable; in short, to speak the truth, the elegant well-preserved lady to whom Truscot had proposed was replaced by an elderly female of sallow complexion, unwieldy form, and peevish expression.

"Where is your aunt?" demanded the Rector of his first-born. "In the drawing-room? Run and tell her who's here. No!" with a kindly remembrance of his own courtship, and a profound oblivion of the difference between his circumstances and Truscot's, "Perhaps Mr. Palmer would like to go to her there, and enjoy her surprise at his unexpected arrival."

It was a surprise, but it brought no pleasure with it. Lady Charlotte, in speechless horror at being caught in such *deshabille* after the chilliest of greetings, and the lengthiest of explanations about her tooth, retired to the privacy of her own room; and Truscot, more than ever resolved to bring about the rupture before alluded to, found himself seated at the homely meat tea with only Mr. Brabazon and his wife, besides the little girls, who out for their mother's prolonged absence would have been in bed an hour ago.

"I find surprises are not always welcome," said Mr. Palmer, in a low tone to his hostess. "Can you at all explain to me how I have offended Lady Charlotte? She is, I feel sure, too sensible to resent my remaining in London a little while to please my uncle, knowing how much depends on his good-will."

Poor Lady Emily! Truth and prudence battled sorely in her kind heart.

"I think the time has seemed long to Charlotte. You see she is not used to a country life, and we are rather dull people."

Truscot shook his head, as though he felt very anxious about the future.

"I fear Lady Charlotte is repenting her sacrifice. You see my house is in the wilds of Devonshire, and my neighbours are quiet, homely people. She may be fearing the dull-

ness of the life to which she has pledged herself."

Tea was over now, the children had vanished, the Rector, with a word of apology, had gone to interview some poor person in his study. Lady Emily and her guest were, perforce, *tête-à-tête* in the drawing-room. The simple, kindly woman was no match for the skilful artful man of the world. She never dreamed his questions were only put because he himself was weary of the engagement, and eager for a pretence to gain his freedom. She put his fears entirely to rest, and thought with such a husband her sister's lot would be fair indeed.

"I don't think you need be uneasy, Mr. Palmer! Charlotte seems to me perfectly satisfied with her engagement."

"And with me?"

Here the lady hesitated. After being a patient listener to her sister's complaints of Mr. Palmer's neglect, she found his questioner hard to answer. She did not guess that her manifest embarrassment was just what Truscot desired.

"I see," he observed, slowly; "my misgivings are not unfounded. Lady Charlotte repents her kindness."

His hostess was saved a reply by the entrance of a servant bearing a telegram. Lady Emily took it up gingerly, half as though she thought it would stab her.

"It is very foolish of me, but I never can open a telegram without all sorts of dreadful forebodings."

He smiled.

"But in this case you know there is no cause for alarm; since the message must be the answer to your inquiries."

Thus consoled she tore open the envelope and read its inclosure, but her brow did not clear, and Mr. Palmer said, anxiously,—

"I trust there is nothing wrong!"

For answer she placed it in his hands. He held it in front of him, and his face was turned away from hers as he read it, so that it was impossible for her to see the impression made on him. He was so long in speaking that she grew positively alarmed.

Of course, he thought something terrible had happened to the poor young governess, and did not like to say so, from sympathy with her employers. The young girl's fate could be no interest to him—a perfect stranger.

Mrs. Maitland was decided in all her ways, and the message was characteristic of herself.

"I saw Miss Briarley into the ten o'clock train, and told the guard to see she got out at Marford."

At last poor Lady Emily broke the silence which her guest maintained so strangely.

"Mr. Palmer, I can see from your manner you think there has been an accident! I wish you would speak plainly! I am very much interested in Miss Briarley, but of course I cannot feel as troubled as though I had known her!"

"Then she was a stranger to you?"

"I never saw her in my life. I was seeking a governess for my little girls, and a cousin of ours recommended Miss Briarley. A week ago I had never even heard her name."

Truscot grew more and more bewildered.

"Then I may speak plainly," he said, slowly. "It looks to me as though Miss Briarley had failed to arrive through some fault of her own."

"Surely that is a harsh judgment?"

"I don't know. You have Mrs. Maitland's testimony she started. You have that of your own eyes that she failed to reach Thorpe, and that there has been no accident on the line."

"But she may have made some mistake. Marford?" suggested kind Lady Emily.

"I can't see how. The thing is so simple. You step out of the train, send a porter for a ticket, and get into the local train when it comes up. I believe in general there is half-an-hour to wait. I had rather less, as the London train was late. I don't see how any-

one could possibly make a mistake, unless, indeed, they wanted to."

The mistress of Thorpe Rectory looked troubled.

"You puzzle me sadly, Mr. Palmer. I have no idea what you are hinting at. Why should any young lady want not to reach the place where she was expected?"

Truscot had gained one point without asking a single question, or betraying unseemly curiosity. The Miss Briarley who had promised to be Lady Emily's governess was young. He felt more and more certain he was on Nell's track.

"Many things might explain that!" he said, sagely; "though the explanation would probably make you feel relieved you had not received your governess. Where there is deceit there is generally wrong. I should say myself Miss Briarley wished to remain hidden from her friends, and so agreed to feign your situation, knowing that she could easily manage so as never to arrive."

"You are very hard on her."

"You said she was a stranger, and all the young ladies in the world are not blameless. Of course, if you know all about Miss Briarley's antecedents, and feel she could have no unworthy story, the case is different."

"I know nothing about her antecedents."

"Had you no references?"

"I will tell you the story—as I know it. I have a very warm-hearted cousin, who possesses the habit of finding out people in trouble, and taking possession of them. Mrs. Wyndham is deceived over and over again in her protégées, but still now and then they do turn out all she believes them. She wrote to me that she was anxious to find a home for a young lady who had been staying with her a month. Miss Briarley was an orphan, and quite dependent on her own exertions. She could teach little children, or would be a charming companion. It was just the style of person I was wanting, and as though to remove all scruples Mrs. Wyndham sent her photograph. She had the sweetest face I ever saw—a face that somehow went to one's heart. My husband and I were delighted. We knew Mrs. Wyndham was a practical judge, but she could not have changed the photograph; and she told us frankly she met Miss Briarley through her being in the railway accident last month. The poor girl was then going to London to seek employment. She had a broken arm, and was a good deal shaken, so my cousin took her home and made much of her."

"A very kind act. Still I think Mrs. Wyndham should not have sent her here without knowing more about her."

"There seemed to us nothing more to know. Girls of eighteen don't generally have histories, or a string of names of employers to speak for their diligence and experience. She had been in my cousin's house a month. Mrs. Wyndham could be certain of her amiability, patience, and refinement; those seemed to me the chief points."

"I can't make it out," said Mr. Palmer, slowly, and for once speaking the simple truth. "I should have said for a girl in her position to get into such a house as this was simply the best prospect in the world. She was an orphan, you see, so no parents could have interfered at the last moment."

"No; and the telegram says she actually entered the train."

"With a ticket for Marford?"

"Yes!"

"I fear it is too late to offer my services to-night; but if you will let me go over to Marford to-morrow I shall be delighted to make inquiries for you. If you could lend me the photograph the officials are sure to be able to tell if any one like it alighted at the station."

"But it will be taking you from Charlotte?"

"We shall have our lives to spend together," said Mr. Truscot, hoping privately such might not be his fate, "and I am sure your sister will be anxious for this matter to be cleared up."

"I am afraid Charlotte will say it serves us

right. She declared from the first Miss Briarley was much too young and pretty."

"When is the first train to Marford?"

"At nine o'clock. But, Mr. Palmer, you must not dream of troubling to go so early."

"Time is all important in such a case," replied Mr. Palmer, virtuously. "I fear I shall be asking for a cup of coffee at an unheard-of hour; but I should like to go to Marford at nine."

"Oh! we always breakfast at eight, if you really don't mind the trouble. I had meant to have a second edition for you and Charlotte at ten."

Mr. Palmer threw up his hands.

"You must not think of such a thing. I am a Devonshire man, Lady Emily, and used to early rising."

"Very creditable of him, but hardly likely to please her sister," Lady Emily observed to her husband that night in the privacy of their own room. She thought Truscot Palmer improved very much on acquaintance. She thought Charlotte very lucky. The Rector looked wise, and at last said, slowly,—

"Do you remember an old couplet the children used to be always quoting, Millie, something about a Dr. Fell?"

"Of course, I do," and she repeated,—

"I do not love thee, Dr. Fell,
The reason why I cannot tell."

"But what in the world was that to do with Mr. Palmer?"

"Only that it exactly expresses my sentiments towards your sister's fiancé. He is my Dr. Fell!"

"George!"

"I cannot explain it to you, Millie, even if I try. I never liked the man, and I don't believe I ever shall. There's a something about him that does not ring true."

"He is devoted to Charlotte!"

"A misfortune!"

"George!"

"Don't be frightened, Millie; I have no idea of publishing my heresy. Your sister will never have a doubt of Mr. Palmer's devotion instilled into her by me."

"It seems ungrateful, when he is taking so much trouble to serve us."

The Rector shrugged his shoulders.

"I should have liked him better had he been more anxious to be with Charlotte. If he had waited till the next train she might have gone too. I presume he came to Hampshire to see her, and not to assist in our domestic disasters." Then, warming to his subject, he added, hotly, "When we were engaged, Millie, you wouldn't have found me proposing to give up a whole morning that might have been spent with you!"

"But we were young, George!"

"Palmer is only three years older than I was then. Surely a man's feelings can't be very different at thirty-five from what they are at thirty-two!"

Lady Emily smiled.

"But you see, George, I was twenty, and Charlotte is forty! Of course it ought not to make a difference, but I fancy it does!"

"And you are yourself," admitted the Rector, with a fond glance at his wife; "and Charlotte can never come up to you; I am quite aware of that."

Lady Charlotte's disgust, when she sailed into the dining-room at ten o'clock in the most perfect of Parisian costumes, to find breakfast laid for herself in solitary state, is easier to imagine than describe.

Lady Emily had told her sister's maid to mention Mr. Palmer's journey to Marford that the lady might not be taken by surprise; but, truth to say, Mary found her mistress in such a temper from yesterday's *contretemps* she dared not risk the communication, and, after all, it came from one of the Rectory children, who said, fearlessly,—

"Aunt Lotty need not wait, for no one else was coming. Mr. Palmer has gone out, and would not be home before four."

Lady Charlotte made a good breakfast. It

took something serious to disturb her appetite; then she sailed majestically into the Rector's study, where she found her sister dusting the writing-table no hired hands were allowed to touch.

"I have come to know the meaning of this!"

"Of what?" asked poor Lady Emily, feeling terribly guilty, although, after all, she had done nothing.

"What have you done with Mr. Palmer?"

"We haven't kidnapped him!" trying to treat the affair as a joke. "As George was very busy he kindly offered to go to Marford for us to see if any accident has befallen Miss Briarley."

"Emily!"

"He offered of his own accord."

"Had I not better engage an errand-boy to perform your messages? I own I should prefer to do so than that my future husband should be sent about like a footman to meet your servants. The idea of asking a gentleman like Mr. Palmer to put himself out of the way for such a piece of deceitful affectation as that girl appears from her photograph!"

Lady Emily saw her mistake. Her sister was afraid she had exposed her lover to the fascinations of a *l'été-d'été* with the beautiful young governess.

"I do not think for a moment Mr. Palmer will find Miss Briarley at Marford. We all agreed last night some accident must have happened after she started."

Lady Charlotte snaked—it's not a pretty word, but it's the truth—all day. When the carriage came round she refused to drive with her sister to meet Mr. Palmer; and so the astute wooer saw only Lady Emily and her little girls at Thorpe platform when he alighted at four o'clock.

"It's not good news," he said, as the children, at a glance from their mother, ran back to the pony's head. "She came to Marford yesterday by the ten o'clock express from London, and went back to Waterloo by the next train. One of the porters remembers getting her ticket—third-class."

The happy wife shivered at the mystery opened up before her.

"I don't like it, Mr. Palmer. I can't understand it!"

"Nor I!" returned Truscot. "It looks as though the young lady was a very black sheep. Where is Charlotte? Did she not come with you?"

"She preferred to stay at home."

"I will go and find her!"

"She has been lecturing me for presuming on your kindness. She says I have treated you like an errand-boy."

"I fail to see it," he said, pleasantly. "If you will drop me at the Rectory as you go for your drive, I hope to persuade her to view our doings more indulgently."

But when, at six o'clock, Lady Emily and her children returned home, it was to find Truscot Palmer pacing the drawing-room alone, his luggage strapped and fastened already in the hall.

"I could not go without a word of good-bye, and of thanks for your kind hospitality. Though I am not to be your brother, Lady Emily, I hope you won't drop me entirely."

She looked at him with a troubled face.

"What can you mean?"

"Only that I have received my *congé*. Lady Charlotte has returned my ring and taken back her promise."

"There must be some mistake. Let me go to her and explain?"

"Not for worlds!" said Truscot, sternly. "She told me she wanted her freedom, as I was evidently marrying her only for her money. After that, do you think I would sue to her again? I may be a poor man, Lady Emily, but I have my pride."

So, sorely distressed, Lady Emily had to let him go.

He slept the night at Marford, and went on by the first train in the morning, reaching the

great metropolis not forty-eight hours after the girl he had come to seek.

He was free! If, as he sometimes fancied, a rumour of his engagement to Lady Charlotte had reached Nell, and caused her flight, he could tell her now the rumour was a falsehood.

Lady Charlotte got over her fit of temper, and bitterly regretted the work of half-an-hour's ill-humour.

"Do you think he will come back?" she asked her sister, peevishly. "Oh, Emily! how could I send him away?"

This was three days after Trusoot had received his *congé*, and no news of him had reached the Rectory.

"I don't know," said Lady Emily, slowly. "I am afraid he won't come back until you send for him."

For a week Lady Charlotte held out. She was actually writing the letter of recall when, one fine morning, her sister came into her room.

"It is too late now, Char," she said, using the old girlish name in her pity. "I have just had a letter from Alice Maitland, and she says Mr. Palmer's old uncle was buried yesterday, and the whole property comes to him. It is impossible for you to write now."

So Lady Charlotte put the letter in the fire, and thought Fate had dealt unkindly with her; while, far away in London, her ex-suitor was glorying in the wealth and freedom that had come so nearly together, and seeking with all the fervour of a passionate nature the blue-eyed girl at whose feet he wished to lay riches and liberty.

Nell was alone in London, and two men were seeking her.

Both loved her well. One had a month's start in the quest, but the other had been called to her rescue by her own voice in dream-land.

This was Lord Arden's one hope. He must find Nell, since she herself had called him. And meanwhile, poor child, she was treading patiently her lonely, thorn-strewn path!

(To be continued.)

THE GOLDEN HOPE.

—O—

CHAPTER L.

Over all men hangs a doubtful fate:
One gains by what another is bereft;
The frugal deities have only left
A common bank of happiness below,
Maintain'd, like nature, by an ebb and flow.
—Sir Robert Howard.

WITHIN its handsome drawing-room were gathered for the last time the three personages whose ambition and vices had wrought so much evil to the Baroness—evil from which had sprung a great and lasting good.

No shadow of impending retribution clouded the fair blonde face of Cecile Forsythe, as, in deepest mourning, she occupied a luxurious fauteuil. Her blue eyes looked placidly out from under her golden curls, and a satisfied smile lingered about her mouth. She was contented and happy.

Andrew Forsythe, smiling and animated, sat near her, and Renee, the Hindoo ayah, gorgeous in fashionable array, half-reclined on a sofa, abstractedly twirling about her fingers the costly rings with which they were covered.

They were like children sporting unconsciously upon the brink of a fearful chasm, and no premonition warned them of their peril!

They had been discussing the previous day's visit of Luke Jensen, and had satisfied themselves that Lady Redwoode had been sacrificed to his fears and cupidity. They had found the man so ready to entertain thoughts of crime, that they knew his conscience and heart would

be alike deaf to any possible entreaties on the part of his victim.

They were satisfied also that, though her ladyship might offer greater bribes than they had done, Jensen would be true to them and his own safety.

"Her ladyship is dead now, without any doubt," said Renee, her eyes glowering with sated hatred. "She is lying under the sea at last. I am glad of it. I never liked her, with her proud ways and grand airs. Lady Redwoode dead, and Hellice homeless! When I stepped over this threshold I said to myself that both those things should be accomplished—and they are!"

"But why did you hate Hellice?" asked Mr. Forsythe, indolently, although the colour in his face changed as he uttered the name of her who alone held his heart. "She never harmed you—"

"She was in my way. She was in Cecile's way. If she had played her cards better she would have been mistress here instead of Cecile. I hate her. I always hated her. She has her mother's grand ways—"

Renee checked herself abruptly, with a startled air, and looked at her companions with keen scrutiny.

Cecile was humming softly, and keeping time to her music by tapping the arm of her chair.

Mr. Forsythe was smiling very quietly, but neither by word nor look did he otherwise betray that he had heard and comprehended the Hindoo's unguarded words.

Jensen ought to be back here to night to tell us that his work is done," observed Cecile, musingly. "I half expect him this afternoon. There is a train, you know, from the north, that is not a through express. I feel safe at last, Andrew. I have no longer fears of Mr. Anchoester and Hellice. Our position is secure!"

"And being so," said the ayah, with a quiet air of command, "I am going to change my rooms, and take possession of Lady Redwoode's suite!"

"But, Renee," expostulated Cecile, quickly, "you cannot do that. The servants will talk. People will surmise that something is wrong here—"

"Let them, then," said Renee, insolently. "The servants have discovered by this time that I am the real mistress of Redwoode. I am willing that you should have the name, but I shall be the true ruler here. I shall take possession of Lady Redwoode's apartments to-day."

Cecile's face flushed angrily, but she offered no farther objections. In truth, she did not dare so to do.

The Hindoo was absolutely intoxicated with prosperity, and felt herself mistress, not only of Redwoode, but of the two shrinking creatures before her. It was to her they owed their present grandeur. With a single touch she could break the bubble of their success, and bring them down to poverty and ruin.

She held in her keeping a secret, which, if it were but faintly whispered abroad, would elevate the missing Hellice, and depress the proud and overbearing Cecile to a dependant's place.

Mrs. Forsythe felt at that moment as if she could never know a moment's security or happiness while Renee lived. The feeling was echoed in her husband's heart.

"Do as you choose, Renee," she said, coldly. "I intend to do so," was the gleeful response. "I am at the top of the ladder now, and nothing can throw me down. I have reached the summit of my hopes at last!"

There was a brief silence, which was broken by the rumbling of wheels on the carriage-drive. They stopped abruptly at the front portico, and Renee gathered up her figure into a more graceful attitude.

Mr. Forsythe appeared intent on a portfolio of choice engravings, and Cecile flung out her perfumed, black-bordered handkerchief that it might be ready for instant use.

"A visit of condolence," she murmured,

"We are really making many friends, Andrew. Who can it be?"

The question was prompted by a loud cry that rang out from the hall, a cry of joy—wild and incredulous—seeming to well up from the very souls of the utterers.

A moment later, and it was hushed as if by magic.

Before the three confederates had time to meditate upon the singularity of the occurrence, the door was thrown open, and the grey-headed old footman, flushed and eager, exclaimed, loudly,—

"Visitors, madam. Visitors, sir—"

Cecile frowned blackly at this style of announcement, but the man paid no heed to her displeasure. He actually capered back again, and ushered in, with a grand flourish, Sir Richard Haughton and Mr. Kenneth, followed by two veiled ladies, and Mr. William Haughton.

The confederates instinctively arose.

"To what do we owe this intrusion?" demanded Cecile, superciliously, without even a glance at the ladies. "Mr. Kenneth forgets that his services are no longer required at Redwoode. As to Sir Richard Haughton—"

The old lawyer interrupted Cecile by a commanding gesture.

"My services have not yet been dispensed with by Lady Redwoode," he said, sternly, and significantly. "I shall not go hence until she bids me go. I recognize no authority here but hers—"

"How? What?" cried the confederates in a breath, their eyes fixed upon the taller and stouter of the ladies, while their faces paled in sudden and awful terror.

"I mean that you, Mrs. Forsythe, are not owner here. Lady Redwoode is alive and well—is here! Her daughter is with her—her own and only child, Hellice Avon!"

By one impulse, Lady Redwoode and Hellice flung back their heavy veils. The face of the latter was bright with joy and gladness, tempered only by a pitying smile.

Lady Redwoode's countenance, while indicative of a soul at rest, of a heart supremely blissful, was yet as stern and sorrowful as that of an accusing angel. Her blue eyes held lambent lightnings, her mouth wore an indescribable expression of scorn and loathing. She looked like a Nemesis!

Cecile stared at her for one moment, as if fascinated. Then, with a wild, horrified shriek, she fell lifeless to the floor.

The Hindoo ayah, with the cry of a wounded beast, bounded towards the prostrate figure, gathered it to her bosom, saw a crimson stream issuing from Cecile's mouth, and believed her dying.

Her fierce love for the unconscious woman burst forth in a torrent of fierce invectives against the Baroness and Hellice. She wailed and mourned as one without sense or reason. She forgot the presence of others in her brief madness.

"She is dead! She is dead!" she moaned, in wild self-abandonment. "Look at Renee, my pet, my sweet, my golden-haired daughter of the sun. They shall not hurt you, my own. I will defend you with my life. Are you not mine? Does not the blood of Renee lie cold in your veins? Are you not of Renee's blood, the child of her child, the all she has to love? Come back! come back, my blue-eyed darling—"

"She is recovering," said Mr. Kenneth, quietly. "She has only burst a small blood-vessel. Give her air and water and she will recover!"

The Hindoo released Cecile, placing her on a couch. She sprinkled her face with water, and fanned her constantly.

The lawyer's prophecy was speedily fulfilled. Cecile came slowly back to consciousness.

Her eyes unclosed, and she looked at the stern face of the Baroness, at the pitying one of Hellice, at Mr. Forsythe, who stood as if frozen to stone.

"I—I deny it!" she whispered, faintly. "I am her daughter."

But Renee, remembering her self-betrayal, stood silent and sullen, with fierce face and glowering eyes.

"I have been mercifully saved thrice from a terrible death!" said Lady Redwoode, solemnly. "I shall not accuse you to the world, Cecile, of trying to kill me—you whom I claimed as my child, whom I thought true, loving and good! And you, Andrew, whom I loved as a son, whom my late husband loved and trusted—I have no reproaches to offer you!"

Mr. Forsythe gasped for breath.

"I have come back to my own," continued the Baroness, her face transfigured to more than human loveliness. "I have brought with me my child. No doubt attends my recognition of Hellice's identity," and she drew the happy girl nearer to her, holding her arm about her tenderly. "Your reign, Andrew and Cecile, is over. Redwoode can no longer be your home."

Mr. Forsythe could not reply. Cecile moaned faintly.

"Mr. Kenneth," said Lady Redwoode, turning to her faithful friend, "please let the servants be summoned. I want to see their honest faces and hear their glad welcome. Hellice must be introduced to them as my child. You must explain whatever is necessary to make the matter clear, for my daughter's identity and position must not lie under any obscurity."

The lawyer joyfully hastened to do her ladyship's bidding.

The Baroness and Hellice removed their bonnets and shawls. Mr. Kenneth gave his arm to Lady Redwoode. Sir Richard followed with Hellice.

Mr. Haughton, with a triumphant expression, brought up the rear.

The servants of Redwoode had all been gathered into the old hall, incredulous, joyful, expectant. At sight of the mother and daughter a loud cheer arose to the very roof—a shouting that seemed endless.

It terminated at last, and then Mr. Kenneth said simply that Lady Redwoode had been rescued from drowning by a fisherman, who had taken her to his cottage, where she had fallen ill of a fever in consequence of her exposure. She had been brought home by Sir Richard Haughton and her daughter, Miss Hellice Avon.

Then followed an explanation of the mystery attending the two girls, and its final solution to the mother's satisfaction.

Again the vaulted roof rung with acclamations.

Never was a scene more bright than that in the grand old hall, and never was a darker contrast than that presented by those disappointed, scowling faces in the doorway!

What words can speak the desperation of Andrew Forsythe, as he marked, with unavailing love and passion, the star-like beauty of Hellice, knowing that her eyes could never look kindly upon him, who had attempted her mother's life, knowing the barrier between them, and yet ready to lay himself down at her feet in very anguish and despair, and breathe out his worthless existence!

It was all over at last—the sorrow and suffering of Lady Redwoode, of Hellice, of Sir Richard.

The desolation, the anguish, the hopelessness, were all past and for ever! They were all over—the useless struggles with destiny, the wild questionings of a strange fate, the sleepless nights, the lonely hours, the painful indecisions; and for them the light of a perfect happiness had dawned, to be thenceforth cloudless and unbroken!

They were all over, too—the schemings and plottings of the guilty confederates, and for them remained only the pangs of remorse, bitter repinings, and a dead level of misery.

The romance and the excitement were beginning already to fade out of these lives we have portrayed, and to each was coming what it most desired—supreme happiness or supreme joylessness.

Lady Redwoode and her friends returned to the drawing-room, while Cecile, Mr. Forsythe, and Renee, stole upstairs to mourn together over their blasted hopes.

The Baroness did not see them again. She could not bear to look upon the faces she had loved, and read in their features their falseness and treachery. She desired to dismiss them entirely from her life and thoughts, and in this effort she was successful.

A brief illness followed Cecile's bursting of a blood-vessel, but it was not serious. Renee and Mr. Forsythe did not quit her side, however, fearing to meet the gaze even of the servants since their downfall.

The confederates were thus compelled to remain a week at Redwoode, and during that week several important events occurred. The principal of these was the death of Anchester.

The fishermen took him back to the manse where Hellice had found shelter from his persecutions, and the worthy minister and his wife cared for him like the good Samaritans they were.

Mr. Locke strove hard to win the East Indian to a state of penitence, and he succeeded, when Anchester learned that his wound was fatal and his hours were numbered. The giant proved a very coward when he knew that the adversary he must next encounter was named Death.

In his abject fear, influenced, let us hope, by a spirit of regret for his wrong-doing, he wrote a full confession of the secret, by which he had held sway over Cecile and Mr. Forsythe, and this confession, signed in his latest moment, and witnessed by the Lockes, was at once forwarded to Lady Redwoode.

It was to the effect that he had been the intimate friend of Horatio Glintwick; that he had attended him in his last illness, and had been with him when he died. It detailed how Anchester, reclining in an adjoining room, had listened to and witnessed the final interviews of Horatio Glintwick with Renee, the Hindoo ayah, with Cecile, and with Hellice, Glintwick's reputed twin-daughters.

These interviews were separate and confidential.

To Hellice, Horatio Glintwick had said simply that one of the girls was not his daughter, but the daughter of his sister, the Baroness of Redwoode. If she were chosen as Lady Redwoode's child, he bade her share equally with Cecile, else she would wrong her cousin.

To Renee, the Hindoo, he said that she must be on her guard and keep their secret well. To Cecile he unburdened his heart. He told her how he had taken his sister's child from her, and by what means he hoped to make his own daughter an heiress. He then declared plainly and without circumlocution that Cecile was his own daughter and that Hellice was his niece.

He advised Cecile to secure to herself a recognition as Lady Redwoode's daughter and heiress, and then, as an afterthought, bade her be kind to her cousin whose place she would usurp.

The matter was thus settled beyond all doubt. Anchester's dying confession and declaration were enough for the eyes of the world. Lady Redwoode needed no further confirmation of the fact of Hellice's identity.

Mr. Kenneth exhibited this document to the confederates before they went away. It was not necessary—their last hope had been crushed before.

Lady Redwoode continued to them an annuity; and with this to depend upon, the three conspirators, conspirators no longer, quitted Redwoode, a week after the return of Lady Redwoode and her daughter. They drove out of the lodge gates just at the sunset hour.

The glorious beams of the radiant sunset transformed the grey old mansion into an Aladdin's palace. The windows seemed set with panes of gold and diamond. Its lofty and grand proportions were more than ever imposing.

The tree, the parks, the lawns, the groves,

were an appropriate setting for the stately old home. It was a fitting abode for virtue and happiness.

Mr. Forsythe set his teeth firmly together, and a tear ran down his cheek. Cecile, pale as death, looked so intently that she seemed photographing the place on her heart. Renee covered her face in silence.

Thus they drove away in sorrow and disgrace from the home they had justly forfeited.

They did not linger in England. They took passage to India, and arrived there in safety. Their annuity procured them a decent and comfortable subsistence, without the luxuries they had so coveted.

Here Cecile, accustomed as she was to the climate, quickly faded into a fretful, querulous, frowning woman, without beauty and without grace. An unquiet heart ravaged her beauty far more than a torrid sun could have done. In the dowdy, ill-dressed, ill-looking woman of a year later, one could scarcely find a trace of the once pretty and admired Cecile.

They were sitting on the verandah of their bungalow one evening, just a year after their departure from England, Cecile ill-naturally bemoaning her fallen estate, while she now and then fretfully glanced at her sickly babe in Renee's arms.

Andrew Forsythe, worn and haggard, looking like the shadow of what he once had been, was engaged in looking over a packet of newspapers he had just received from England. Suddenly, he uttered an exclamation that startled the woman at his side.

He had discovered in a court journal a notice of the marriage of Miss Hellice Avon, only daughter of Lady Redwoode of Redwoode, to Sir Richard Haughton.

The notice was followed by an elaborate account of the rare beauty and grace of the young bride, the happiness of the bridegroom, the number of bridesmaids, the jewels worn by Lady Redwoode, with further fashionable particulars, every word of which was a stab to Andrew Forsythe.

He read it through, flung down the paper, and strode off with a face so dark and agonized and a step so fierce that Cecile and Renee were amazed.

The wife picked up the paper, glanced at the half-column that had so disturbed her husband, then bowed her head and wept tears bitterer than she had ever shed.

Surely, Lady Redwoode and Hellice were avenged!

The lives of the Baroness and her daughter, during their months of continual intercourse before the marriage of the latter, flowed in a tranquil, pleasant stream. Their hearts became knit together in bonds of love that could never be broken.

The fulness of a divine content possessed their souls, and Lady Redwoode was repaid at last for her years of sorrowful yearning over the child of whom she had been so long bereft.

When Hellice, after some months of waiting, married Sir Richard Haughton, the young Baronet proved the truth of the trite saying that in him her ladyship had "gained a son." The family circle at Redwoode is one of the happiest in the kingdom.

Lady Redwoode and Lady Haughton are leaders in society, benefactresses of the poor, and friends of the needy. Sir Richard Haughton is blessed among men.

Mr. Kenneth still resides at Redwoode, an honoured member of the household. He is as round and rosy as when first introduced to the reader, but his face has gained additional wrinkles, and his hair is as white as snow.

Miss Kenneth resides at Holly Bank, and she frequently alludes in her conversations with her rector and curate, on the occasions of their weekly visits, to "my friend, Lady Haughton, Lady Redwoode's daughter."

Margaret Sorel, the divorced wife, retired to Sorel Place. Here she lived in dreary solitude, attended upon by the Jonsens, who had become soured by their failures in crime, and here she died within a week of the marriage

of Sir Richard Houghton. Her brother succeeded to her property, ran through it, and died poor.

The Jensions were sent adrift by the new owners of Sorel Place, and retired to a cabin near that of Rille, where they are spending the remainder of their days in labouring hard for their daily bread.

When Hellice and Sir Richard went away on their bridal tour, they revisited the scenes in Scotland, where the former had endured so much persecution from Anchester.

They carried liberal and costly gifts to the old minister and his wife; and good Mr. Locke, with tears in his eyes, as he looked on the rare and lovely face framed in its rippling hair, said that he had fulfilled the scripture prophecy, and in entertaining Hellice had "entertained an angel unaware."

[THE END.]

DRIVEN TO WRONG.

—30—

CHAPTER XXXI.

A PRIVATE INTERVIEW WITH SAMUEL BIGGS.

"For your own sake, Mr. Hilhouse, I would advise you to go home to bed, and sleep off your insane folly," said Elsie Charlton. "By morning, you will see things in their true light, I hope, and not make yourself the laughing-stock of the parish."

He absolutely foamed with passion.

"I will never give my consent to your marrying my son," he said. "Cecil only wants you for your money. He shall marry Roes D'Aroy, or he shall never inherit a penny from me!"

"He will never wed Miss D'Aroy," said Elsie, with a smile. "He loves me too well. As to your accusation, I give up my entire income the day I marry again, so his affection cannot be mercenary."

"And he knows this?"

"He knew it before I left India."

For a moment he was silenced.

Then he broke out again with fresh fury.

"It shall never be if I can prevent it," he cried, passionately.

"It would be useless to try, so suppose you look the matter plainly in the face, Mr. Hilhouse," said Elsie, gently.

"I am sorry if I have said or done anything to give you pain, and you know just as well as I do that I have done so innocently. Now let us be friends, for Cecil's sake. You are his father, I his future wife. Let bygones be bygones, and when you get home make Nellie happy, and send Marion to me as soon as you can," and she held out her hand to him. "I will be a good daughter to you if you will let me."

He roughly jerked her little hand aside.

"I will not let you," he returned, still in anger, "and Marion shall not enter your doors again. As to Ellen, she shall not marry against my consent; that is settled, at any rate."

"Mr. Hilhouse," said Mrs. Charlton, very earnestly, "Nellie is a high-spirited girl. She will not stand oppression. Oh! I do not drive her to do wrong, I am sure you will regret it if you do."

"Who made you a judge?" cried the Rector. "Remember I brook no interference in my affairs, Mrs. Charlton."

"Nor I," she retorted firmly, and the two stood looking one another in the face. Then Elsie turned to the door, and opened it. "Good bye, Rector," she said, gravely. "When you feel inclined to apologize for your conduct, for Cecil's sake, and with his permission, I shall be happy to see you again."

And she closed the door behind him without further sign of temper.

When the Rector was gone, Elsie Charlton sat down, and broke into a merry peal of laughter.

"It is certainly the unexpected which

always happens," she murmured. "I decidedly did not anticipate receiving an offer to-day, and of all people in the world Mr. Hilhouse is about the last from whom one might have looked for such an unpleasantness, and I am truly sorry it should have happened. Poor Cecil! he will scarcely know whether to be most amused or annoyed at this curious piece of intelligence, and I strongly suspect the fortune, which he accused my darling of seeking, was his most powerful temptation."

"Poor, gentle Mrs. Hilhouse! forgotten in three months, or at the best supplanted in her husband's mind; and how she served him for thirty years! Oh! mankind, mankind, but for Cecil's sake I should be an utter sceptic in any sort of good; as it is, I know that it *does* exist, and is a hardy plant in some hearts. The old horror, to accuse me of making love to him! I never was so insulted! Had he not been Cecil's father"—and the little widow let her small right hand clench, and a bewitching little red-gauntlet frown gathered upon her white brow; but the anger and amusement gradually gave way to sadness, as she thought of Marion and Nell.

"I wish I could have helped them," she murmured, "and now poor Marion will be debarred from even seeing me—and Nell. I tremble for Nell Hilhouse's future," and she placed her writing materials upon the table, and eased her mind by writing her lover an account of the scene which had taken place between her and Mr. Hilhouse that evening.

As to that worthy, he returned home in a very perturbed state of mind.

Elsie had been quite right in her suspicions. He had thought that her income would prove a very valuable addition to his own, and he had undoubtedly been most anxious to secure it.

Moreover, he decidedly admired the little widow, who held a sway over him, with her quaint fascinating ways, which he had not experienced in the society of any other woman.

He had taken a fancy for her, and it irritated him horribly that she should treat his proposal to her as a joke, and absolutely laugh at him.

He had not seen their faces reflected side by side in a mirror, or he might have been reminded of the legend of Beauty and the Beast!

He was, for all his plainness, a very vain, self-satisfied, and conceited man; and he considered himself quite a suitable mate for Mrs. Charlton, whatever she, and the world in general, might do!

He was highly indignant with Cecil, both for supplanting him, and also for wanting to ally himself to a penniless woman.

Whether he would have cared to have her himself, under these altered circumstances, he did not pause to think. His mind was completely taken up with indignation against Elsie, and the shameful manner in which he deemed she had treated him.

In fact, she had wounded his *amour propre*, and thoroughly disgusted him.

He felt sorely tempted to expose her "perfidy"; but, upon the other hand, he knew that a jilted man is always rather an object of ridicule than of pity, and her words rang in his ears with unpleasant meaning.

"Do not make yourself the laughing stock of the whole parish!"

The parish, that is, the people in it, had not behaved well to him in the affair of Mr. Gresham, and who could tell how they might behave in the matter of Mrs. Charlton? Who could say that they might not take her part, and blame him for his precipitate proposal to her?

So, even before the night's rest, which Elsie had recommended to sober his thoughts, the fear of ridicule brought a reaction to his mind, although he none the less desired to see her punished and exposed.

All this passed through his mind on his

homeward journey, and when he reached the Rectory, he entered with a latch-key, and went into the drawing-room, where Marion sat by the fire at needlework, and Nell beside the table, showing by the restless tapping of her hand upon the mahogany that she was nervous and excited.

As Mr. Hilhouse came in she raised a pair of eager eyes to his, and, springing to her feet, ran to his side; but started back, as she saw the black looks which greeted her, and the angry scowl upon his brow.

"Oh! papa, what is the matter?" she cried, in an anxious tone.

"Nothing which concerns you, Ellen," he answered, sharply.

"Oh! I hoped you might have had good news for me," she faltered. "I hoped Mrs. Charlton might have been able to persuade you to let me be happy."

"I must request that Mrs. Charlton's name may not be mentioned in my hearing—nor will I allow her to visit at my house. I beg you both to understand my views; and Marion, I forbid your returning to her. She is a worldly, unprincipled woman, and no fit companion for you!" he said, hotly.

Marion looked at him with indignation and astonishment, in her usually soft, dark eyes.

"May I ask you when you found all this out, papa?" she asked, with a touch of sarcasm. "I thought she had been an angel of mercy and kindness to us all, helping us in our griefs and sorrows; and I am sorry you have not the heart to be grateful to her."

"It is not for you to question, but to obey," he replied, sternly. "Your opinion of Mrs. Charlton's character will not bias mine in the least. Were you aware that she has entrapped your brother into an engagement?"

She hesitated for a moment, remembering she had promised Elsie that no one should hear of the engagement from her; but she would not stoop to an untruth—and it was evident that her friend had told her own secret, and thus annoyed her irascible father.

"I have seen that they were attached to each other for a long time past," she replied, openly, "and I wonder you did not notice the fact too. It was patent to all, I should have thought—and I am very glad, for Elsie will make Cecil a splendid wife."

"Not with my consent," he answered through his set teeth.

"Surely Cecil's engagement cannot have angered you, father!" exclaimed Marion, loyally. "I thought he had chosen so wisely!"

"And I think quite the reverse."

"Why?"

"I do not allow my own daughters to question me on my actions," he replied.

"Remember you do not return to Mrs. Charlton's house."

"Not at all?"

"Not without my permission."

"Father, I cannot give Elsie up. I will not even pretend that I am going to do so. She has been so very, very good to me!"

He looked at her in astonishment.

"You would dare to disobey me?" he asked.

"Marion, if you do, you had better seek another home."

"I have been thinking that for a long while," she answered wearily. "I do not see that either Nell or I are of any use or comfort to you; on the contrary, all we do seems to annoy you. I believe it would be a relief to you if we went away, and we might be useful elsewhere."

He had spoken in temper, without one definite thought of Marion's leaving him, nor did he in the least desire that she should go, and her words struck upon him painfully, but he was too proud to admit it, or to acknowledge that he was in the wrong.

"You can please yourself," he answered coldly, "and Ellen too. I do not desire to keep anyone beneath my roof who does not wish to remain there."

"Papa," said Nell, "I do not wish to leave

you like this. Let me marry Laurence, and then we shall part as friends."

"I cannot consent," he returned, doggedly. "You can choose between Mr. Travers and your father," and at that juncture the door opened, and the servant announced that Mr. Biggs wished to see the Rector.

Nellie Hilhouse looked thoroughly uncomfortable at this information, a fact which did not escape her father's vigilant eyes, and he ordered him to be shown into his study at once.

Nell tried to make her escape to silence Samuel with her last coin, but it was of no avail, for the burly form of Mr. Hilhouse blocked the door, and he went off without another word to interview Mr. Biggs.

Samuel was standing with his hat in his hand, and his weaknesses very much together, not looking especially comfortable, when the Rector entered the room and bade him be seated—an order which the hypocrite carried out with extreme care and caution apparently—but whether his anxieties were in favour of his own rusty garments, or the Rector's chair, deponent sayeth not. He looked up at Mr. Hilhouse with lack lustre, fishy eyes.

"You once told me, sir," he began, in a humble semitone, "never to refer to any member of your family, and I have obeyed you so far; but it has been pain and grief to me, sir; it has indeed. When I see you deceived, Mr. Hilhouse, it has gone to my 'cart,' and I have said to myself, in my own breast, and in the solitude of my own little room with the door locked, I have said, Mr. Hilhouse, if they'll deceive our sainted Rector they'll deceive anybody; and sainted I am sure you *will* be, sir, when your time comes, and far more deserving of the honour than many who's now in the prayer-book calendar, and yet they goes on deceiving you still, as true as my name is Samuel Biggs.

"It's not Miss Marion now, sir, poor lamb! She's seen the error of her ways, and come back to the fold. I'm sorry for Miss Marion, Mr. Hilhouse, she looks so sad and pale! It's hard for her, it is, indeed, when her and Mr. Gresham was so very much together. Everyone thought as he meant to marry her, 'cept me, perhaps. I always had my doubts of him when I saw him going on with other ladies. Mrs. Charlton, now, he was with her a great deal—a very great deal. I may say at all hours of the night and day. I've seen him going in and out," and Samuel's cunning eyes looked straight into those of his Rector with a quick, sly glance; for, truth to tell, he had followed him and Mrs. Charlton from the church, and had had his ear against the window of her dining-room during that angry interview between them.

He had, moreover, followed Mr. Hilhouse home, and had noted the black cloud which was visibly over him, and he thought abuse of Mrs. Charlton would now be acceptable, and worth, at least, another half-crown.

Besides all this, he was already in the pay of Mr. Gresham to undermine Mrs. Charlton at the Rectory, although the Rev. Faulkner had certainly not given Biggs permission to couple his name with hers, but that of Captain Hilhouse.

Nevertheless, if people *will* play with edged tools they must be content to get hurt sometimes, and Mr. Gresham could not expect better luck than his neighbours.

"If you know anything against Mrs. Charlton it is your duty to inform me, Biggs," the Rector said, encouragingly.

"Well, sir," said the other, "it's a task as I don't like. Mrs. Charlton has a pleasant way, but right is right, and wrong is wrong, and Mr. Gresham was there a sight more than he ought to have been. But there, perhaps he meant to behave honourable towards her till he heard the queer stories which came after her from India—very queer stories, sir, as one might say!"

"What were they?" asked Mr. Hilhouse, eagerly.

"Well, that's just it, you see, Mr. Hilhouse;

they mightn't be acceptable if you heard them," he answered, with mock hesitation.

"Leave me to be the judge of that," replied the Rector.

"Very well, sir—very well. I'll leave it in your hands," and he got up, and, advancing to Mr. Hilhouse, whispered in his ear.

"My son! who bears my name, has thus been talked about with a married woman, Samuel Biggs?" he said, sternly. "This really is too terrible! Oh! human nature! human nature! what a weak thing it is! Yet I considered Coill the soul of honour—the soul of honour, like myself!"

"No doubt he was, sir! no doubt he was! It's all the ladies, sir, and ever was since the time of Eve. No doubt whatever she led him away, as we have many Bible instances set before us. There are some as says she's had the boldness to cast her pretty eyes on you, sir; and pretty they are, there's no denying it. But there, that I puts my foot on at once. No one don't dare to speak twice of the Rector before Sam Biggs. He knows what's due to him as is set over him in the Lord—he do, indeed. And if you can do anything, sir, to prevent the Captain from getting into further mischief—well, sir, he'll thank you for it by-and-by if he don't now, sir, as probably he won't. But, whatever his feelings are or may be, sir, my dooty's towards you, and I've made up my mind to do it, Mr. Hilhouse!"

"Then you have more to tell me?" asked the Rector.

"I have, sir, with your permission, I have," he continued, in a sepulchral tone of voice. "If so be you'll hold me guiltless, if what I say annoys you?"

"Go on," returned the Rector. "Biggs, I request you will keep back nothing which I ought to know."

And the strange sound which followed this command was, in reality, a chuckle, although it suggested all sorts of horrors—marrow-bones and cleavers, death rattles and convulsions all in one!

(To be continued.)

A GIANT GLACIER.—We came in sight of Alaska's giant glacier at about five o'clock. It presented a solid wall across the bay, white, massive and majestic, and seemed in its cold grandeur like the repose of some monster beast not yet awakened from its night's slumber. At nine o'clock we anchored, and the passengers were landed on the adjacent shore, when a stampede at once began for the glacier, and every soul climbed its rugged sides. This feat involved neither risk nor danger; the surface was rough, sometimes gravelly, occasionally muddy, and often steep, but always perfectly safe, except from the possible consequences of a bruised knee or a sprained ankle, and the proof of this that everybody (men, women and children) climbed as high as they could go, and all got down and back to the steamer without a single accident. Standing below and looking up into the face of that shimmering mass, one is reminded of the flight of the Israelites, the parting of the waters of the Red Sea and the fate of Pharaoh. The creeping of glaciers is an established fact in physical history, and this one is said to be a living one, advancing at the rate of fifteen inches a year, but it encroaches no further on the sea, and never advances beyond its present boundary, because the temperature of the water is so much warmer than the ice, that as it crawls into the sea it perpetually melts below and breaks off above. The breaking and falling of the ice is accompanied by detonating reports, and is an interesting sight to witness. Sometimes a small piece of only a few pounds, at other times the face of a whole escarpment weighing tons; now a projection gives way, and then a peak topples over, all of which keeps up an agitated sea at its base with mimic waves.

LADY LILITH.

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CHAPTER XII.

TRUE to her promise Lilith walked over to the Woodlows the next afternoon, and was admitted to the house by Stephen Brooks.

"Come in, my lady!" he said, quietly, holding the door open for her to pass through, "we have been expecting you."

She went into the parlour—the pretty, low-ceiled room where she had first seen Letty soon after her marriage—and here she found James Redmayne sitting in front of the fireplace, his elbows resting on his knees, and his head buried in his hands. His attitude of itself was sufficient evidence that nothing had been heard of the missing girl; and the parlour, with its untidy litter and fireless grate, looked curiously in keeping with its occupants.

"I am afraid your search has not been successful," Lilith said, taking the chair that the old farmer offered, and addressing herself partly to him, and partly to Stephen Brooks. It was the latter who answered in level, self-contained tones, that formed a great contrast to Redmayne's agitation of the previous day.

"No, my lady, we have not found her, if that is what you mean; but we haven't been idle, and we have heard one or two things that may be useful to us. People are very anxious to come forward now and tell us all they know, and a good deal they don't know," he added, bitterly. "But then! that's always the way. As soon as the steed is stolen you will hear on all sides that the stable-door was not 'safely locked.'"

"What have you discovered—if I may ask?"

"You may ask, and welcome, my lady, for we both know that you don't put the question out of idle curiosity; and, for my part, I am grateful to you for your kindness to the old man—he told me of it yesterday. I had your telegram about one o'clock, and I left Glasgow within an hour of receiving it, but it was too late to do anything last night, so I have only had this morning to work in. I have inquired at the railway station, and tried to find out where our poor girl went to, but no one seems to have noticed her, and it is just possible that she walked to W—, and got in the train there, so as to avoid detection. However, in any case, we may make pretty sure she is in London, and there I shall go and look for her."

Lilith was struck by his voice and manner. The former was firm and assured, the latter full of quiet confidence; and at first she was inclined to think that he had not felt Letty's desertion to half such a degree as had James Redmayne. One look into his face told her her mistake. It was drawn, pale, aged by ten years since she saw him last—indeed, if she had met him anywhere else, it is doubtful whether she would have recognized him, in spite of the fact that she had been much impressed by his individuality when she first saw him with Letty.

His grief was not loud, but it was deep. He did not wring his hands and cry out as the old farmer had done; but he set his teeth together, and crushed back the invective that involuntarily rose to his lips, telling himself this was the time for action—not words.

He had come straight from work when he left Glasgow, and had not even stayed to change his clothes. His hair was unbrushed, his chin unshaved—altogether he was very different from the neat, well-tended young mechanic who had smiled down with such proud fondness into Letty's pretty face as he walked up the garden path with her in the sunny glow of the autumn afternoon.

"I am afraid this is a very great trial for you," Lilith said softly; and at the words, so gently spoken, and the pure womanly sympathy of the violet eyes, a swift change came over the young man's face, and for a

moment it almost seemed as if he were on the point of giving way.

"It is a trial—how great no one in the world can know!" he said, in a low, hoarse undertone. "I loved her so truly. I would have died for her if my death could have benefited her in any way! But that's not the point now. She has gone away because she was silly and vain enough to listen to compliments, and let herself be tempted by some fine gentleman with white hands, and a soft voice, who could tell her lies by the dozen, and promise her jewels and fine clothes, and pleasures that were not in my power to give her. But the fault is his—not hers. She is so young and innocent that she knows no better, and I do not even blame her. But for him—" Stephen paused, his gloomy eyes flashed into sudden lightnings, his nostrils dilated, his breath came short and quick through his teeth, and he brought his clenched hand down on the table near which he stood with the force of a sledge hammer. "For him no punishment can be great enough. His sin is blacker than murder—for murder only kills the body. It does not, like his crime, pollute the soul. But he shall answer for it, first of all to me, and then to Heaven, for I swear by that same Heaven, that I will never rest until I have brought him to justice! You, Lady Lilith Lyndhurst, you, James Redmayne, both hear me, and bear witness to my oath. I devote myself and my future life to the task of finding my enemy, and when I have found him, let him look to it, for mercy I will have none!"

There was something intensely dramatic both in the words and attitude of the man as he spoke them. Rough, unshaven, with blackened hands and soiled clothes, he stood by the table, with the pale wintry sunshine falling on his face, and lighting up the fierce resolution in his eyes, and one instinctively felt that this threat of his was no mere empty boast, likely to be forgotten when the momentary excitement was over, but the expression of a desire that could only be satisfied when the hour of retribution came.

"Hush!" Lilith said, rising hastily. "Does not your Bible tell you that vengeance belongs to Heaven?"

"It may do so, but the Bible also says, 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life'; and that is what I shall take for my text."

Lilith was silent. Of what use was it to argue with this man, when the madness of passion was upon him? All in a minute his manner changed—became quiet and subdued as when she first entered.

"You asked me what we had found out, my lady, and I was going to tell you. It seems that Letty has been in the habit of going for long walks lately, and several times in the evening. People have seen her in the plantation with a gentleman who was usually dressed in a long ulster, and wore a slouching felt hat that concealed his face. Three people have told me the same thing, so I know it must be right, and they all agree in saying her companion was a gentleman."

"Perhaps they are wrong in that particular?" faltered Lilith. "If the man's face was invisible, how could anyone judge of what he was?"

"It is not only the face that betrays gentle birth, Lady Lilith. There is something in the way a gentleman holds himself—something in the way he walks, and wears his clothes, that is different to us working-men, and that we can generally recognize him by. Besides, a common labourer, or farmer even, would not have taken Letty's fancy. She was a dainty little creature, with tastes and ideas far above her station, and I often wondered that she ever cared for me. But she did—once, before his black shadow fell on her path."

There was nothing that Lilith could do, and nothing that she could say which was likely to be of any avail, and, as a matter of fact, she was half alarmed at old Redmayne's sullen apathy, and Stephen Brooke's fiery

denunciations. She felt herself helpless in their presence, and was glad to get outside the house into the fresh air again.

It seemed to her as if she had suddenly been brought face to face with a tragedy that touched her as keenly as if she herself were an interested person. The remembrance of Brooks's face, and threats of vengeance haunted her all day and all night with wearying pertinacity.

More than ever she wished that Lyndhurst would come home, so that she might thrust her burden on his shoulders—for during his absence she felt as if his responsibilities devolved upon her, and it was in some way her duty to help in the search for Letty Redmayne.

That same evening she wrote to Colin, giving him full particulars of all that had happened at the Woodlows—a practical, matter-of-fact sort of letter, brief and to the point, but utterly devoid of either sympathy or sentiment. This was due, less to deliberate intention, than the very natural awkwardness she felt in addressing her husband under the peculiar circumstances of their marriage—circumstances which pressed on her even more heavily when he was away than when he was with her.

His answer did not come for two days, and then it was as scur and business like, as her own note had been. Strangely enough, he made no sort of allusion to the Redmaynes, simply contenting himself with giving directions for the guidance of the steward, and adding that he should probably return the next night, although his arrival might be deferred a day later. Lilith was conscious of a certain disappointment as she put the letter down, and then took it up again to look at its beginning and ending. "Dear Lilith," "Yours faithfully." Why, a stranger would have addressed her in almost similar terms, and an acquaintance would certainly have written in a warmer strain!

She forgot that her own epistle had been couched in exactly the same way, and that Lyndhurst's spry sense of independence would naturally induce him to err rather on the side of coldness than of warmth.

Impatiently enough she threw the letter down, and took up another that had come by the same post. It was from Lady Lester, and it told her that the writer had taken a furnished house on the south coast in consequence of the delicate health of her daughter Marcella.

"Of course," wrote Lady Lester, "it is a very great nuisance having to come here, but the doctors would not hear of Cellie wintering in London, and she really does not seem strong enough to bear the journey to the south of France—which is where I should have preferred taking her. I am very angry with her. I am quite sure she could get better if she liked to exert herself, but she won't. She is a tiresome, obstinate girl, and seems quite determined to worry me—and, as you know, I have all my life been so entirely devoted to her interests that I have hardly thought of anything else—except, of course, your own, my dear Lilith, and your welfare, I flatter myself, I have contrived to secure. Now, what I want you to do is to come to Seaview (that is the name of the house, although we are a good half-mile from the sea), and try whether you can rouse Marcella from her apathetic state, and induce her to exert herself. She says she is sure the sight of you will do her good, and I think so too. Besides, you will perhaps be able to bring her to her senses, which is more than I can succeed in doing. Of course, your husband will come too; and, in order that you may not be dull, I have invited a few people down to meet you, and Sir Ralph Sinclair, who lives near, has placed his grounds at my disposal. Write to me at once, and tell me the day you are coming, and the train, and I will send a carriage to the station to meet you."

The letter, in its selfishness, was eminently characteristic of the writer, and from her

knowledge of her aunt's character, Lilith was enabled to read between the lines.

Marcella must be very ill indeed, or her mother would never have consented to give up her usual autumn visits; and, very probably, the poor girl was being worried by Lady Lester into accepting some suitor whom she did not like, and it was her obstinacy in this particular of which Lady Lester complained.

Lilith was fond of her cousin, and her sympathies were instantly aroused on her behalf.

"She shall not be the victim of my aunt's match-making schemes!" she exclaimed, with determination; and, in spite of her objection to meeting Lady Lester—whom she blamed as the cause of her own marriage—she resolved to go to Seaview, and judge for herself as to whether Marcella's illness was the result of her mother's desire to force her into a marriage against which her inclinations rebelled.

If this were the case, then she, Lilith, would have something to say in the matter, and she knew Lady Lester well enough to be aware that her niece, Lady Lilith Lyndhurst, wife of one of the richest commoners in England, would have a great deal more influence with her than ever Lady Lilith Desborough, the penniless daughter of Lord Aunthorpe, had had!

CHAPTER XIII.

It was night when Lyndhurst came home—a cold, raw evening, with a white mist lying down in the hollows and a nipping wind blowing, and bringing with it a suggestion of rain.

The Hall looked the picture of homely comfort as he drove up; lights flashed from the windows, and a flood of warmth poured out into the night when the great front doors were opened, and the ruddy glow of a pine-wood fire became visible in the oak-raftered hall.

"There is something in the song after all," Lyndhurst said to himself, on alighting. "There certainly is no place like home."

But even as the thought struck him he sighed, for to make home perfect to a man there must be a wife's tender smile to greet him, and the loving prattle of childish voices to bid him welcome, and there, Colin knew, were not for him.

No baby laughter would ever echo through the grand old rooms—no baby footsteps would make music in the silent passages; he would never see his sons or daughters, in whose youth he might renew his own, growing up about him. With himself the name of Lyndhurst would die out!

"Well, it does not matter," he thought, but the thought was accompanied by a pain which no philosophy could stifle.

The grapes were out of his reach, but even this fact could not persuade him that they were otherwise than sweet.

If he had hoped that Lilith would come to meet him, the hope was doomed to disappointment, for he did not see her until after he had changed his travelling-dress, and then he went to her boudoir to seek her.

She had not troubled to dress for dinner, and still wore a tea-gown of black satin and lace, lit up here and there by the flashing of jet, and a few bows of flame-coloured ribbon; but no attire could have shown off her fair beauty to greater advantage, and her husband paused on the threshold of the room, in admiration of the picture she made.

She greeted him quietly, and with a tranquillity that was neither warmth nor coldness.

"You have had dinner, I presume?" she said, after he had taken a seat near her.

"Yes; I dined on my way down, but I shall be glad of a cup of coffee if you will give it me."

She poured him one out; and, as she handed it to him, looked into his face.

"I cannot say that the change of air has had beneficial results, so far as your appearance is concerned," she observed. "You look quite pale and ill."

"Do I?" he returned, absently. "I am not surprised at it. I have been worried and harassed a great deal."

"Has the business that took you to London proved so troublesome then?"

"It has—far more troublesome than I anticipated. However, I must not complain."

"He checked himself rather abruptly, and remained for a few seconds looking thoughtfully into the fire that was blazing on the hearth, but he did not mention what the nature of the business was. When he spoke again it was to change the subject."

"Have you any news to tell me?"

"No—that is to say, none in particular. I saw Stephen Brooks this morning, and he said nothing had been heard of Letty Redmayne."

Lyndhurst's brow contracted, and he took up the brass poker, and poked the fire with an energy that surprised his wife.

"We will not talk of Letty Redmayne," he said, almost harshly. "It is a subject that is better avoided. Have you had any callers since I have been away?"

"Yes, one or two."

"Lady Westland?"

"No."

"Nor Sir Horace Dalton?"

"Certainly not!"

"You have not met him during your walks?"

"No," Lillith said, haughtily resentful of these questions, whose motive she misinterpreted. "I have taken no walks except one to the Woodlows the day after your departure."

"Then he has probably left Lady Westland's?" went on Lyndhurst, interrogatively.

"I think not—in fact, I know he has not; for yesterday I passed him on the road when I was driving in the brougham, but he did not see me."

The contraction of Lyndhurst's brow grew more pronounced. He leaned his head on his hands, and seemed lost in thought, while Lillith took up her embroidery, and made a pretence of working at it. Presently however, the silence grew unendurable, and she broke it by telling her husband of Lady Lester's letter and invitation.

"Certainly we will go," he said, with alacrity. "Where do you say she has taken a house?"

"Seaview, near Bournetown."

"Where?" exclaimed Colin, starting to his feet, and looking at his wife in amazement.

She repeated her former sentence, much surprised at the effect it had had upon him; and he, recovering himself, laughed rather awkwardly as he resumed his seat.

"After all," he observed, "the account of your cousin's health may be exaggerated, and we had better wait until you hear again before deciding on going to Seaview."

"Why, you just said you would accept the invitation at once!" exclaimed Lillith, and Colin seemed a little confused at the accusation.

"Yes, but second thoughts are proverbially best."

"Not in this instance—at least, so far as I am concerned. Of course, you can do as you like, but I have already made up my mind to go and see Marcella, and I shall start without delay."

She spoke quietly, but resolutely, and her tone warned Colin that it would be useless to try and persuade her to alter her mind.

"I have no wish to prevent your seeing your cousin," he said, gently. "No doubt you will enjoy your visit quite as much without me, as if I accompanied you."

Lillith did not reply for a few minutes, but sat playing absently with her work, as if in thought. When she spoke it was with a slight increase of colour.

"It is not a question of enjoyment. From that point of view it would be immaterial to me whether I went alone or not, but you must recollect that we have not been very long married; and the fact of our being

separated from each other would be sure to excite remark, especially from my aunt, who, you know, is very curious concerning other people's affairs."

"You mean, then, that you would like me to be with you?"

"I mean that it would save gossip if you were."

"Very well—then I will come."

Soon after this, he went to his own room, and both husband and wife were dissatisfied with their interview. Lillith was conscious of the reluctance with which Colin had given in to her wishes to visit Seaview, and he, on the other hand, fancied there was an extra degree of coldness in her manner and her greeting. He was haunted by the idea that his return was unwelcome to her, and that, in effect, she preferred her own society.

This idea was all the harder to bear because, before his departure, he had imagined the barrier between them was slowly but surely melting away, and that in time she might even grow to love him. Now the fancy was dispelled—the illusion vanished under her quiet indifference, and he mentally anathematized himself as a fool for even having indulged in it at all.

The next morning he went to the Woodlows, but what passed between him and James Redmayne Lillith never knew—indeed Colin evinced a singular reluctance to speaking of Letty before her, and whenever the subject was mentioned, it was invariably she herself who introduced it.

A few days later they started for the south coast, and on the morning of their departure Lillith chanced to pass through the hall, where the luggage was piled up ready to be put into the dog-cart when it came round. Amongst the various trunks and boxes was a small Gladstone bag—a favourite of Lyndhurst's, which he invariably took with him wherever he went—and on this was pasted a label, evidently of recent date. The label bore upon it the words, "Waterloo to Bournetown."

"You did not tell me you had been to Bournetown lately?" she said, turning round to Lyndhurst, who was just behind her, drawing on his gloves.

"And who told you I had been there?" he asked, quickly, and—as it seemed to her—irritably.

For answer she pointed to the label, and Lyndhurst, as he saw it, looked undisguisedly annoyed.

"I did go to Bournetown the last time I was away from home," he admitted, unwillingly. "Business took me there."

Lillith made no remark, but she could not help wondering why he had chosen to wrap his visit in such a veil of secrecy. As a rule, he was the most open and candid of men, but during the last week or so he seemed to have changed altogether, and the fact of his not having mentioned his visit to Bournetown seemed all the stranger, in view of his present intended stay there.

The journey to Waterloo, and thence to Bournetown, was not by any means lively. Colin provided his wife with magazines, and himself with newspapers, and then each subsided into his or her respective corner, and did not speak until the terminus was reached. It reminded Lillith a little of that other journey to Dover on their wedding day—and she shivered at the recollection.

Seaview proved to be a very pretty house—long, low, and fantastically built, surrounded by pine woods, and with the sea for a background.

Lady Lester stood on the steps ready to welcome her guests, very tastefully dressed as usual, and looking, by the aid of sundry artifices known only to herself and her maid, rather more juvenile than her own daughter.

"My dear, dearest Lillith!" she exclaimed, folding her in her arms with much *empressment*. "How delighted I am to see you! And how are you. Looking lovely as ever!" holding her at arms' length, and gazing keenly into the

beautiful face of her niece. "A little pale, to be sure, but that is the effect of the journey, and will soon wear off. You, too, Mr. Lyndhurst—Colin, I may say, may I not, now that I am your aunt-in-law?" this very acquiescently as she held out her hand, which the young man gallantly kissed, "Let me welcome you most heartily."

"And Marcella, Aunt Gertrude, how is she?" asked Lillith, disengaging herself from Lady Lester's embrace, and drawing a little farther back.

"Marcella! Oh, don't speak of that wicked, ungrateful girl. She will break my heart, I am sure she will!" and Lady Lester whipped out a delicate lace-edged handkerchief, and held it to her eyes, without, however, permitting it to touch them.

Lady Lester's eyes were not innocent of a certain dark compound supposed to be peculiar to ladies of the Mohammedan persuasion, and, although this article was warranted by its vendor not to come off, previous experiences had warned her ladyship against putting it to the test; therefore tears with her were a luxury not to be lightly indulged in.

"I will tell you all about her after dinner. At present I am sure you must be simply starving!"

"May I not see my cousin at once?" asked Lillith, in a disappointed tone.

"Certainly not, I could not think of your worrying yourself about her directly after your arrival; besides, she is resting, and I don't want her to be disturbed."

After this, Lillith could hardly say more, so she went upstairs, followed by her husband—who took possession of a dressing-room which had been provided for him; and as soon as dinner was over, and Lady Lester and her nieces were together in the drawing-room, a detailed account of Marcella's iniquities was poured into the young wife's ears, and Lillith found that her first ideas on the subject were not far wide of the mark.

It seemed Marcella had had the wickedness and imprudence to fall in love with her drawing-master, a young man who had been a sort of protégé of Lady Lester's, and in whom she had placed the most implicit confidence.

"Actually they were engaged!" she said, dropping her voice to a solemnity befitting the announcement of this truly awful crime. "He had given her a ring, and she had let him paint her picture and keep it. Did you ever hear of anything so perfectly scandalous in your life?"

Lillith confessed it was imprudent, but hinted that similar events had happened before; and, after all, *Cellie* was very young.

"Young, my dear!" repeated Lady Lester with much indignation. "She is over eighteen, and that is quite old enough to know better. Why, I was married when I was her age, and I only wish she was married too! I can assure you it would be a great weight off my mind; and I should have managed it beautifully if she hadn't got ill just to spite me!"

"I suppose you broke off the engagement?" said Lillith, with a view of keeping her to the point.

"Of course I did, and sent the young man about his business, and looked my lady in her room for three days to bring her to her senses. But, instead of having that effect, it made her ill. It seems she sat at the window and caught cold, and the cold settled on her chest. Since then she has moped—moped—moped—done nothing but mope, in fact, and I grew frightened, and called in a doctor, who advised me to bring her here. Now, my dear Lillith, first thing in the morning, you must go to her, and see what you can do with her. She was always more ready to listen to you than to me, even when she was a child; and perhaps you may be able to make her see the error of her ways. You must make her go out for walks; the doctor says she wants fresh air and exercise, and up to the present she has absolutely refused to stir out of the house unless I will let her go alone—which, of

course, I won't, for one never knows what tricks girls may play on one. Ah, if I could only see her as well married as you, Lillith!"

The young girl turned away her head, and made no answer to this remark. And, after a few seconds' pause, her aunt continued, curiously,—

"You are happy, Lillith, are you not?"

"My dear Aunt Gertrude, let me recall what you said to me once: 'A fine house, horses, carriages, jewels, a box at the opera—what more can any woman in her senses desire?' Well, I am in my senses, or, I hope I am, and I have all these things. Is not that answer sufficient to your inquiry?"

Lady Lester was satisfied with the reply. She was not given to looking below the surface, and in her heart she considered her niece a woman to be envied, and congratulated herself on the share she had had in bringing about the marriage with Lyndhurst.

The sadness in Lillith's eyes, the deep undertone of unsatisfied longing in her voice, were unnoticed; and, if Lady Lester had fathomed their meaning, she would only have been astonished and indignant at the supreme silliness of a girl who wanted more than Lady Lillith Lyndhurst had already bestowed upon her.

CHAPTER XIV.

MARCELLA LESTER was not pretty—that is to say, she had not regular features, or a peach complexion, but for all that her face was a very sweet one, and her eyes were really beautiful—soft, dark, and wistful-looking.

She was as unlike her mother as it was possible to be, and perhaps this fact had something to do with the very small amount of affection that Lady Lester lavished upon her.

When Lillith saw her she was shocked at the change that had taken place in her appearance since their last meeting; the poor girl had grown painfully thin, there were deep hollows round her eyes, and her cheeks were white as May blossom in springtime.

It was not only physically that the alteration was visible—she seemed to have lost all spirit, all hope, all youthfulness.

"Now, Collie, I want you to come for a walk with me," Lillith said, wisely refraining from any remarks on her cousin's changed appearance. "It is a lovely morning for the time of year, and it is our duty to make the most of it."

"Is mamma coming with you?" asked Marcella, with a painful hesitation.

"No. We are going alone, so put your things on at once."

Marcella obeyed immediately, and a little later they were in the pine woods, walking towards the sea, which spread itself out like a sheet of molten silver in the autumn sunshine.

Every now and then the younger girl glanced half timorously towards her cousin, and at length, as if unable to contain herself any longer, she exclaimed,—

"Oh Lillith—Lillith—do you blame me as well as mother?"

"Dearest," Lillith answered, gently. "It is not my place to blame you—I can only be sorry for you!"

"But mamma has told you all?"

"She has told me that you engaged yourself to Mr. Calvert, your drawing-master, without her knowledge or consent?"

"And you think that was very wrong?"

"I certainly cannot say I think it was right."

Marcella sighed heavily, and pressed closer on her cousin's arm.

"I suppose it was wrong," she said at last, slowly; "and yet—and yet—oh Lillith! I did love him so! I love him still, and always shall love him as long as I live!" she exclaimed, with a sudden burst of enthusiasm.

"Surely you who are just married—you, who have such a noble, good husband, and who must love him so very, very dearly—can sympathise with me if mamma can't!"

It was Lillith's turn to grow pale now, but Marcella was too excited to notice it. This was the first time she had been able to speak unreservedly of her trouble, and in her eagerness she threw off all her customary timidity and shyness, and gave unrestrained vent to her feelings.

"Mother contradicts herself," she went on, rapidly and incoherently. "First of all she says I am a child, and therefore incapable of love, and then she declares I am old enough to know better than believe in such nonsense. Lillith—she is wrong in both instances! Love has made a woman of me, and if I live to be a hundred, I shall never be too old to declare that it is the most beautiful, the most sacred, and the most enduring feeling we have. I know Arthur Calvert is not what the world calls a good match, but I don't care about that. He has no money, and no title—nothing beyond his genius, and his youth, and—himself. But I want no more than that. I should hate to take my place in that world of fashion as mamma does, and live for nothing but parties and balls, and fine dresses. I am not fitted for it, and it would kill me; but I would a great deal rather die than marry a man for the sake of any of these things—riches, or a grand name!"

Marcella was transfused as she spoke thus, and Lillith gazed upon her in amazement. She had never imagined her little quiet cousin capable either of feeling or expressing such sentiments, and somehow she felt herself at a disadvantage—even humiliated before Marcella's enthusiasm.

"Where is Mr. Calvert now?" she asked, wisely refraining from making any comment.

"Abroad—at Rome, I believe; but I promised not to write to him, or receive letters from him; and I have kept my word, so that really and truly I know very little concerning his whereabouts. Mother had an interview with him, and told him he was taking advantage of my youth and inexperience to draw me into an entanglement which I should presently regret, so he declared he would give me up until I was twenty-one, and then I should decide for myself whether I would marry him or not."

"In that case," observed Lillith, "I don't think you have very much to complain of. If you are both true to each other, there is nothing to prevent your marrying after you are of age, and you have not so very long to wait before that."

"I would not mind the waiting. I would willingly wait ten or even twenty years, but"—her voice sank to a whisper—"I am afraid of mother. I know she will let me have no rest. She will be always worrying me to marry somebody else, and sometimes it seems to me out of very weariness I shall succumb."

"But that would be mere weakness, Marcella!"

The young girl shook her head despondingly. "Yes, it may be; but I feel sure that will be the end. You don't know mother as well as I do, Lillith. When she once makes up her mind to a thing she goes on and on until she gets it, and it is not the least use struggling against her. It is the constant dropping that, in the end, wears away the stone."

Lillith smiled to herself rather grimly, thinking that she also had had an experience of her aunt's pertinacity, of which Marcella was happily ignorant. She did her best to comfort the young girl, but she was not able to offer her much consolation, for in her heart she believed—as Marcella did—that eventually, Lady Lester would achieve the object on which she had set her mind.

By this time they had left Seaview about a mile behind them, and were now passing a small house, partly hidden in trees, which by reason of its prettiness attracted Lillith's attention. It was little more than a cottage, but its exterior was covered with ivy, and the little porch leading to it, overgrown with various gorgeously tinted creepers.

In the garden were thickets of fuschia, myrtle, rhododendron—none of which were

now in blossom—laurestinus, and different species of shrubs, while the lattice windows were prettily draped with some soft-hued Eastern silk, suggestive of wealth and good taste.

"What a pretty little place!" Lillith observed, and Marcella answered indifferently,—

"Yes, it is rather pretty. It is called the 'Rosary,' and has only just been let. When we came to Seaview it was empty, and mother and I went over it one day."

"Who has taken it?" her cousin asked.

"A lady, but I don't know her name. I have met her out walking once or twice, but she invariably wears a thick veil—so thick, indeed, that it seems as if she wants to disguise herself. Once I saw her at the window, and she seemed to me very pretty, but I was some distance off, and she disappeared directly she caught sight of me, so I don't know that my opinion is worth much."

During the next few days nothing particular happened.

Lillith went out most mornings with her cousin, while Lyndhurst joined Sir Ralph Sinclair's shooting party—Sir Ralph was Lady Lester's nearest neighbour, and Colin already had a slight acquaintance with him.

Lady Lester herself was singularly quiet—so quiet, indeed, that both Lillith and Marcella were of opinion she must be meditating some scheme which necessitated much thought.

"By the way, Lillith," she observed one afternoon, when the three ladies were having tea together, "does your husband know any one living down here, except Sir Ralph Sinclair?"

"What do you mean?" asked Lillith, unable to see the drift of the question, and conscious, from her significant manner, that her aunt had some object in putting it.

"Well, I saw him going into that pretty little house which is called the 'Rosary,' and I fancied from that he must be acquainted with its tenant."

"If he is I am unaware of it," Lillith answered, rather uneasily. "When did you see him?"

"Yesterday evening, just as it was getting dark."

"And did he see you?"

"No. I was walking with the Rector, whom I had just met, and who offered to see me home, as it was growing rather dark."

"Are you sure it was Mr. Lyndhurst?"

"Quite sure."

"But, as it was dusk, you may have been mistaken, mother," put in Marcella, who saw that Lady Lester's revelation was unpleasant to Lillith.

"Nonsense!" sharply. "Do you think I have lost my eyesight, or do you doubt my word? I tell you it was Colin Lyndhurst, and I saw him enter the house!"

"Strange!" murmured Lillith, in a troubled voice, as the remembrance of the label on Colin's bag flashed across her mind. Then she added, in a tone of studied indifference, "Mr. Lyndhurst has a great many acquaintances, and it is not at all unlikely that one of them has taken the 'Rosary' as a shooting-box."

"That might be," returned Lady Lester, "only," with a malicious sparkle in her eyes, "the tenant happens to be a lady, so that it is rather unlikely the cottage has been taken for the purpose you mention."

"How do you know the tenant is a lady?"

"Because the Rector told me."

"Does he know her, then?"

"No. He does not even know her name; but he heard, through the owner of the house, that a lady had taken it, and he is of opinion that the lady is rather mysterious, too. He called, but she sent out word that she did not receive any visitors whatever. Looks queer, does it not?"

Lillith made no reply, but she felt hurt and angry both with her husband and Lady Lester. If the former was really acquainted with the mistress of the "Rosary," why had he not mentioned the fact, instead of leaving Lady



"I SUPPOSE IT WAS WRONG," MARCELLA SAID AT LAST; "AND YET—OH LILITH! I DO LOVE HIM SO!"

Lester to find it out, and thus subject himself to absurd suspicions?

"There is another thing I wanted to mention to you," went on Lady Lester, as Marcella left the room to fetch some work. "Sir Ralph Sinclair is going to have several more guests down next week, and amongst them is your old friend, Horace Dalton."

Lilith started violently, and an exclamation of annoyance escaped her lips, which Lady Lester saw fit to ignore.

"You have seen him since your marriage?" she said, quietly, in an interrogative tone; and on Lilith answering in the affirmative, she continued, "That is well. It is always a good thing to get awkward meetings over, and no doubt yours was awkward. But there will be no embarrassment to either of you when you see each other again. And, as a matter of fact, I expect you will meet pretty frequently, for I was always fond of Horace, as you know."

She turned her bracelets complacently as she spoke, and watched the firelight flashing on the gems of which they were composed.

A sudden idea struck Lilith, and she bent forward rather eagerly.

"Aunt Gertrude, had you anything to do with Sir Horace's invitation?"

Lady Lester looked uncomfortable.

As we know, she objected to telling lies on principle; although there were occasions when she thought herself justified in infringing the rule. In the present instance, however, she decided to be bold, and tell the truth.

"Yes," she said, with daring assurance. "I suggested his name to Sir Ralph Sinclair. It is some time since I have seen him, and I am anxious to renew the acquaintance."

"Formerly you did not think it such a desirable one?" said Lilith, slowly.

"No; but changes have taken place since then, and I am consistent in altering my opinion. Twelve months ago Sir Horace was simply a spendthrift baronet, who had run

through all his fortune, and only had the vaguest expectations; now he has the whole of old Lord George Leatherstone's money, and an income of several thousands a-year. You must acknowledge there is a great deal of difference between the two positions?"

She did not add that she had fully made up her mind to marry her daughter Marcella to the handsome Baronet; but such was, nevertheless the fact, and it must be confessed that she had laid her plans with some ingenuity. She knew that Sir Horace would be quite wary enough to suspect her designs if she invited him to her house, and purposely threw him into Marcella's society; but if the invitation came from Sir Ralph Sinclair he would suspect nothing, and Lilith's presence at Seaview would be a sufficient inducement to make him accept the offered hospitality. In effect, Lady Lester knew perfectly well all that had happened at Westland Chase, for Lady Westland was a friend of hers, and in the habit of writing long, gossiping letters that kept her pretty well informed. She was quite aware that Dalton's admiration for Lilith was as warm as ever, and had calculated on it as likely to materially assist her plans. If—as would probably happen—the Baronet came to Seaview with the hope of seeing Lilith, it would be easy enough to throw Marcella in his way, and with a little diplomacy on the part of the hostess, and judicious expenditure in the way of becoming dresses, Marcella might end by being Lady Dalton.

At all events, it was worth trying for, and no scruples on Lilith's or Lyndhurst's behalf were likely to deter Lady Lester from giving it a chance.

"If Sir Horace comes," said Lilith, after a pause—and she spoke slowly, as if with painful effort—"I hope, Aunt Gertrude, you won't invite him here."

"Why not?" sharply.

"Because my husband would probably resent it."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Lady Lester. "If he is inclined to be jealous the sooner you break him of such foolish habits the better. Besides, such an idea is absurd. Does he suppose that now you are married you are going to throw over all the male friends who admired you when you were single? You must convince him of his error. Such notions may be all very well for tradespeople (and you know Mr. Lyndhurst has tradespeople's blood in his veins!) but they are out of place in Lady Lilith Desborough's husband."

Lady Lester was, for some reason or other, annoyed with Colin, otherwise she would hardly have spoken so candidly to his wife, and Lilith marked her sense of displeasure by rising and leaving the room without comment.

That same night she knocked at Colin's dressing-room door, and on entering, told him that she thought they might as well return home, as Marcella was certainly a little better than she had been, and there seemed no urgent necessity for their presence.

To her surprise he appeared reluctant to accept the suggestion, pointed out that Lady Lester fully expected them to stay another fortnight, and would probably be offended if they curtailed their visit.

"Besides," he added, "I have taken advantage of your absence to have some alterations made at Heathcliff, and it would be awkward to go back in the middle of them while the workmen are about."

"I should not mind it in the least."

"Oh yes, I am sure you would. You have no idea of the trouble and inconvenience you would be put to. Another thing, too—it is your presence that has brightened your cousin up so much, and it would be hardly kind to leave her so soon."

"As you will," Lilith answered, and then she quitted the room, feeling that the only thing left for her now was to accept the inevitable with as good a grace as possible.

(To be continued.)



["YOU MUST KNOW, MAX," THE YOUNG ARTIST CONTINUED, "THAT THERE IS A LADY IN THE CASE."]

NOVELLETTE.]

THE MANOR HOUSE GHOST.

—O:—

CHAPTER I.

"AND I am mistress and owner of all this!" exclaimed Maude Raymond, as she turned and slowly surveyed the sight before her. "Yes! Mistress and owner of this grand old Manor House! A girl to be envied by all, indeed; at least, so my numerous friends and acquaintances tell me. But—I think differently. Ah, me! Why did poor dear papa add that one condition? Why is it that I shall never look upon this venerable old pile—my ancestral home—with aught but pride alone? I can imagine regarding it with proud feelings surging in my heart, but I can *never* be happy here!"

The girl shivered, while a look of disgust arose quickly over her fair face as she walked forward a few paces: then again stopped at a small rustic bridge, spanning a pretty silvery stream.

It was a glorious day in July. The Manor House, the home of Maude Raymond's ancestors, was looking its best, and richly deserved all the encomiums lavished upon it by strangers.

Facing the girl, as she stood now leaning against the rails of the small rustic bridge, was the grey old mansion, with its battlemented walls and mullioned casements, while to the right and left stretched a smooth, grassy lawn, and bright, many-hued flower-beds.

"A splendid place, certainly; and how happy I could be here! But then—*why* did poor dear papa add that terrible condition? Lester Frere! Bah! how I hate the sound of those two words already! And what would it be to hear them repeated day after day, till goodness knows when? And then the man himself! Some small wizened-look-

ing creature, I have no doubt, who congratulates himself upon having so easily secured one of England's fairest ancestral domains; and who will spend most of his time in going about hunting up musty and dim-coloured volumes, for Mr. Street says he is very learned, and, of course, one knows what that means! Ah, me! Sooner than marry such a man I will relinquish all *this*, though it would be a bitter pang to do so, 'tis true. But still, I am fully determined that I will marry no man unless I *love* him first!"

A faint throb stole over the girl's fair face, while a soft look flashed into her large, dark eyes.

"So Lester Frere (how I do hate the name!) may just live here by himself, and study his sad-coloured volumes in peace, and free from all interruption, as far as I am concerned. Marry a man who pretends to love me, while all the time it is my estate and wealth that usurp his real affections! No, never! So let Lester Frere claim the Manor House as his own, and I—I will be content with the small income which will still remain to me. But I am forgetting poor dear Ellie all this time. I should think she must want some tea after her long chat with Mrs. Dent. I will return at once."

So saying, Maude Raymond drew herself up and turned away towards the distant grey pile, across the small bridge, and on past flower-beds, bright with scarlet geraniums and golden calceolarias, and so up to the stone steps leading to the hall door.

Just within the spacious stone entrance the girl was met by a lady—an elderly person, with sweet face and pretty brown hair just streaked with grey.

"My dear Maude! I am glad you are returned from your ramble of inspection, for I was just getting rather nervous respecting you."

"Nervous, Ellie, dear! Why you need not fear for me, surely, in the broad daylight!"

replied the girl, laughing; and then, stealing one hand within her companion's arm, she turned, and with her entered a room upon the left.

"But, Maude, dear! Mrs. Dent has been telling me that there is a large party of gipsies encamped near here, and I thought that perhaps you—"

"Might have allowed some of them to cross my palm with silver for the sake of hearing more about Lee—, my unseen and unknown future husband, eh, Ellie? Confess, now, that your fears were more respecting the vulgar fortune-telling than any personal harm that could befall me from that wandering tribe?"

Mrs. Ellis smiled gently as she returned the girl's merry look; but she shook her head gravely.

"No, Maude. I was not at all alarmed about your having your fortune told; but one hears and reads such things now a days, and you see, my dear, your jewellery might alone prove a temptation."

"Ah! I shouldn't like to lose my watch, certainly. It was a present from my dear mamma!"

The girl sighed, while a grave look stole over her pretty face as she uttered the sacred name, but the sad thoughts fled quickly at the sound of another voice.

"Will Miss Raymond like to have tea brought here, or shall I—"

"In here, by all means, Mrs. Dent. And, please, let it be brought up at once, for I am very thirsty."

The staid housekeeper smiled as she turned away, and gave her orders to the maid standing behind.

"And Mrs. Dent, I am going to ask you to preside; and while we drink our tea, I want you to tell me all you can about the Manor House. I think I once heard that it was haunted."

"Oh, Miss Maude! Who can have told

you anything about it?" asked Mrs. Dent, in great consternation.

The girl laughed merrily, as she noted the frightened expression on the housekeeper's countenance.

"Why, surely, Mrs. Dent, there is no great harm in my knowing about this wonderful apparition, that is supposed, at certain periods, to visit here?" she asked.

"Your dear mamma, Miss Maude, was most careful that no mention of the ghost should be made in your presence, when she was alive, and I had hoped that you had heard nothing about it."

"Really, this is getting quite interesting!" exclaimed the girl, in light, mocking tones.

Then added, in mock gravity,—

"But, Mrs. Dent, you have never seen this ghost, have you?"

"I would rather not say, Miss Maude," replied the housekeeper, in low, awe-struck tones; and she glanced round the room timidly.

"Maude, dear! let us have our tea and do not trouble further respecting an idle rumour. Of course you know so well that there are no such things as —"

"But I do not know it, Ellie; and I am going to get Mrs. Dent to relate all she can about this supernatural personage," interrupted the young girl; then added,—

"Ah, here comes tea. Now, Mrs. Dent, for the tale! Ellie, dear, are you all attention?"

"Yes, dear; but I wish you would not compel Mrs. Dent to talk upon a subject to which she is most averse," gently replied Mrs. Ellis.

"Mrs. Dent, please begin; and Ellie, don't think me very naughty; but I must hear the tale," remarked the girl, as she seated herself in a low chair to the left of the open French window.

"Well, Miss Maude, if you will hear the tale I suppose I must obey, though I wish you had asked me before now. It is growing quite dark in here."

"Ah, that is because there are so many creepers round the window, Mrs. Dent," came the answer, as Maude Raymond drew her chair a little nearer to the housekeeper.

"Well, Miss Maude, it must be about a hundred years ago now that a Master Raymond brought home his fair bride, the beautiful and winning Mistress Maude, and just a year later a daughter was born to them, and then there were rejoicings indeed; for there had not been such an event in the family for at least two generations. Well, Master and Mistress Raymond were very proud of the pretty dark-eyed little girl. Time went on, and the little Miss Maude—"

"My name!" exclaimed the young girl.

"Yes, Miss Maude, and you are the very image of the picture of this Miss Maude Raymond. The same dark eyes, the same brown hair, all wavy, the same—yes, the same beautiful face. The little Miss Maude grew up to be a most beautiful lady, and was much admired and loved by all who knew her. And after a time she had many suitors—some rich and of high birth, the chief of whom was a certain Lord Staines; others poorer and of humbler origin. But to all the beautiful young lady spoke kindly, and treated all graciously; but when they spoke of love to her she turned away and shook her head sadly. She was sorry to pain them; but she could not love them."

"So time went on. Master and Mistress Raymond interfered not openly with their daughter's suitors, but secretly they favoured my Lord Staines. It was the eve of Miss Maude's eighteenth birthday, and on the morrow there was to be great rejoicings held in honour of the event. Numberless were the invitations sent forth for the great ball that was to be held in the evening, and all were accepted. And among the numerous guests came a young man—uninvited, it is true; but he had heard so much of Miss Maude's beauty that he was determined to

view it for himself. So he stole into the spacious and crowded ball room unnoticed by nearly all. Now it so happened that he was fortunate enough to render Miss Maude some slight service during the course of the evening, and she— Well, it was a case of love at first sight! They danced several times together, learnt all about each other, and then (very unwisely, it seems to me) Miss Maude promised to meet him again the following day, down by the little rustic bridge in the beech grove. Very unwise of her. But then she had always been allowed her own way and she was daily growing so tired and weary of my Lord Staines and her other numerous suitors. And—strongest reason of all—she already loved this stranger youth! So they met the following eve at sunset, while her mother reclined in the amber drawing-room, and her father sat with his guests over their wine.

"Meeting followed meeting, till at last the young Clinton avowed his intention of claiming her openly from her proud father. He did so. But his suit was refused with cold and harsh words, and he himself forbidden the Manor House. And every day Lord Staines redoubled his attentions, and was received with more and more favour by both Master and Mistress Raymond. And poor Miss Maude! She came forth from this very room, where her father had summoned her to tell her his decision—pale, sad, and spiritless. And she continued to be, notwithstanding all the gaiety and merriment around her. The summer passed away, leaving her wan and dejected. Autumn was drawing nigh, when, one evening, as Miss Maude was stealing out alone, to visit the spot where she had so often met her banished lover, she once again heard Master Clinton's voice, and once again his arms were around her; and then, as they paced together beneath the leafless beech-trees, his plans were unfolded to her, and she agreed to them. A week passed away, during which Miss Maude had daily regained her former bright looks and cheerful ways. And Master and Mistress Raymond were happy again, while Lord Staines took advantage and spoke again of his love. But Miss Maude quickly silenced him by casting upon him cold and contemptuous glances, and then left him suddenly. Another week passed, away and then, one bright October night, Miss Maude dismissed her maid earlier than was her wont, and speedily set to work to collect all her jewels and other valuables. An hour or so later, when all the household slept, she arose, and, throwing a dark and hooded cloak around her, and setting in her hand the small trunk containing her jewels, she proceeded cautiously and noiselessly down the broad oaken staircase, across the stone hall, and so on into this very room!"

Here Mrs. Dent paused awhile, and glanced timidly around the fast darkening chamber, while her young mistress rose, placed her empty cup on the table and quietly remarked, as she resumed her seat,—

"Please continue, Mrs. Dent."

"Yes. Into this very room Miss Maude walked, and crossed it in the full light of the moonbeams shining in through the windows, stopped there by the fireplace. One backward glance, to see if anyone were following her, and then pressing a small knob a panel flew back, and a secret staircase was disclosed. Down this Miss Maude descended, carefully closing the panel after her. At the foot of the stone staircase she was met by her lover, who proceeded with her along the subterranean passage till they both emerged once again into the moonlight just below the little bridge in the beech grove; then quickly along under the leafless trees to the carriage in waiting for them at the further end of the grove. All seemed prospering, when two figures suddenly emerged from some holly-bushes near by. Her father's hands tore Miss Maude from her lover's grasp, and she was borne quickly away, calling upon her lover to save her as she went. Then, as she was being borne quickly away, a

shot rang out on the clear frosty night, and simultaneously arose a shriek from the poor young lady's lips as she guessed the sad result.

"For weeks she lay unconscious of all around her. And when, later on, consciousness returned to her, it was but the wreck of the once beautiful girl that Master and Mistress Raymond still called daughter! For her mind never fully recovered the terrible shock it had sustained; and she was continually crying out for her lost love. And still, it is said, you may hear the stealthy footsteps down the oaken stairs, and you may watch her slight form cross this very room, and disappear through yonder panel."

The housekeeper concluded in low, awe-struck tones, glancing meanwhile in the direction of the fireplace.

Her young mistress rose, and, drawing near to her, said,—

"Show me the exact spot where she entered, Mrs. Dent."

"Better not look down there, Miss Maude," was the answer.

"But I want to. Come, show me the very spot!"

Unwillingly the housekeeper rose, and, with frightened look and slow steps, advanced to the panel nearest the fireplace, and silently placed her finger on a small white knob in one corner.

"Press it, Mrs. Dent," commanded her young mistress.

The timid housekeeper hesitated for an instant, then obeyed.

The woodwork slid aside, and a rush of damp air followed.

Both drew back at the same moment.

"Come away, Maude, dear!" pleaded Mrs. Ellis from her seat.

"Just one look down, and then I shall be satisfied," replied Maude Raymond, as she advanced and glanced down the dark stone staircase. "What a dismal place!" she exclaimed, then herself closed the panel, and turned to the housekeeper at her side.

"Thank you very much, Mrs. Dent, for telling me the tale. I shall dislike the Manor House more than ever now that I have heard this. But, Ellie, dear, I am afraid we have kept Manners waiting. I ordered the carriage to be round by seven, and it is now eight!"

No reply from Maude Raymond's chaperon.

"I think the lady left the room while you were looking down the staircase, Miss Maude. Perhaps the tale frightened her. I do hope you will think no more of it, Miss Maude."

"Oh, pray don't be alarmed for me, Mrs. Dent!" replied the young girl, gaily. "I never believed in ghosts; but I do think it would be nicer for you if there were someone living here. I must consult Mr. Street, and see what he can do towards obtaining a tenant. Are you not nervous yourself sometimes, Mrs. Dent?"

"Well, Miss Maude, and tell you the truth, I do feel a bit frightened now and then, and especially at those times when the ghost is to be seen," replied the housekeeper, glancing timidly round the room meanwhile, and speaking in lower tones.

"Then I will certainly do my best to get a tenant. That will make the place seem livelier for you, Mrs. Dent."

"Thank you, Miss Maude."

"Now, I must really go. Good-bye, Mrs. Dent, and don't think too much about the ghost," and then the young girl turned away and took her place in the carriage, wherein was already seated Mrs. Ellis.

One wave of the hand to the housekeeper, who had followed her to the hall-door, and then Maude Raymond and her companion were whirled away to the former's pretty villa at Richmond.

Maude was an orphan.

Her father had met his death in India while taking part in a tiger-hunt. The enraged beast had suddenly turned and made a frantic leap at the horse carrying Oscar Raymond. The startled animal reared, then missed its

footing and rolled down a steep bank, carrying its unlucky rider with it. The rest of the party, passing that way only five minutes later, were horrified at the spectacle that met their sight. They bore the poor mangled body of their comrade back to the town, and gave it burial, and then a message was despatched across the seas to the poor widow.

Maunder was but five years old then; but, child as she was, her father's death made a great impression on her childish mind, and she was able to join her childish tears with those of her widowed mother. The latter was so overcome by the shock that she only survived her husband a few months. And then the little Maude was left alone in the world; rich in this world's riches indeed, but alone—quite alone as regarded friends and relations.

Mr. Street, the family solicitor, was appointed her guardian, and nobly did the good man set about the performance of the trust assigned him.

A happy and comfortable home was found for the poor, lonely little heiress in a small town in *la belle France*.

Twelve happy years did Maude Raymond spend in the establishment of the good and high-principled Madame Vervien. Twelve years; during which time the orphan grew up from a sorrow, dark-eyed child, to be a beautiful maiden of sweet seventeen.

And then her guardian proposed that at that age she should leave the retired life at Ardres and return to her native land, and take her place in the society to which she rightly belonged, by virtue of her birth and wealth.

Sad, indeed, was the parting between the good Madame Vervien and her loving pupil. And then Maude Raymond, the beautiful heiress, returned with her guardian, and soon after took up her residence in a pretty villa at Richmond, chosen for her by her faithful adviser, accompanied by a Mrs. Ellis, whose duty lay in that of chaperonage to the beautiful girl.

And now, on the day on which my tale commences, Maude Raymond has paid her first visit to the grand old Manor House—her ancestral home. But a few days previously; she has heard from Mr. Street the conditions by which alone she can retain possession of the grand old pile. The conditions, namely, that she consent to wed and become the bride of a certain Lester Frere.

So runs her father's will, and there is no gainsaying it. Either become the bride of a man, as yet unknown to her, or else for ever relinquish her claim to the stately home that, for so many generations, has acknowledged none but a Raymond as master!

She has pondered much over the alternative, and has come to the conclusion that she would rather allow the Manor House to pass away to a stranger than ally herself to that stranger—did she not love him!

And Maude Raymond was possessed of a strong will.

Long that same night, upon her return from visiting the house of her forefathers, did she sit by her open window and reflect upon all this, and then the housekeeper's sad tale returned to her; and she smiled as she recollected the frightened eyes and timid countenance of the narrator.

"Poor, dear Mrs. Dent! I really do pity her, and I will certainly write to Mr. Street to-morrow, and ask him to procure a tenant. Strange that anyone can be so foolish as to actually believe in ghosts! Such very unreal beings as they always prove to be known!" she soliloquised. And then she thought of Lester Frere, and pondered, again and again, over her father's reason (unknown to her) for thus adding such a conditional clause to the will made in her favour.

"I will never marry a man I do not love! Never!" she murmured, as she at length rose from her seat at the open window; and gently closing it, repaired to her couch, where she was soon dreaming over again the tale told by the housekeeper at the Manor House.

Mr. Street duly received a letter from his beautiful ward, desiring him, forthwith, to procure a suitable tenant for the Manor House.

"I wish this, as I feel it will be better for Mrs. Dent. Poor woman! She seemed so nervous yesterday, when telling me the history of the 'supposed' ghost, that I decided it would be better for her if she had more people about the place. So I shall be much obliged if you will at once take steps to get a tenant. I do not think I shall ever care to live there myself; not because I fear the ghost!"

So ran the letter, and Mr. Street smiled at its final words; then sighed softly, as he murmured,—

"Poor little Maude! Am I right in concealing all I know of him? Yes. I must be, for it was her father's special wish that she should meet him first as a perfect stranger; and then, if she —. But she is sure to fall in love with his choice. She can't help it, if he is at all like the photograph he sent me this morning. By-the-bye, what did I do with it?"

The lawyer pushed aside some of the papers, lying so thickly on the desk at which he was seated, and drew from under them an envelope bearing a foreign post-mark.

"Yes. You are a decidedly good-looking fellow, and I have no fear but that you will suit the fastidious taste of my lovely ward," he murmured, as he drew forth the likeness and regarded it through his gold-rimmed glasses.

"Shall I send her this? No. That would scarcely be fair. I will leave well alone, and allow them to meet as strangers; but, once they do meet, I prophesy that matters will go smoothly enough, and the wedding-bells will speedily —."

Here Mr. Street's soliloquy was interrupted by the entrance of a clerk, who was followed by a small, girlish figure, dressed daintily in soft-falling cashmere.

"Miss Maude!" exclaimed the astonished solicitor, as he rose and warmly greeted his fair visitor.

"Yes, Mr. Street. I have no doubt you are rather surprised to see me, but I could not resist the inclination to pay you a visit."

"And Mrs. Ellis, Miss Maude?"

"Oh, Ellie is so charmed with certain gowns and so forth at Madame Pratt's that she finds it hard to tear herself away from them, or to make a decisive choice. So I suggested that she should call for me here when she really has finished her shopping."

"Which I hope may not be for some time, Miss Maude," gallantly replied the lawyer, as he proceeded to place the most comfortable chair his office possessed for the accommodation of his visitor.

"I shall not be disturbing you, Mr. Street?" asked the girl, presently.

"Not at all, Miss Maude. I was just idling my time away when you entered."

"And you received my letter, Mr. Street?"

"Yes. I have it here, and I shall send in an advertisement to the principal papers to-day, and I have no doubt the Manor House will not long remain tenantless."

"I hope not, for Mrs. Dent's sake," laughingly replied Maude Raymond. Then added, "What a charming residence it would make for an artist, Mr. Street! I noticed so many lovely bits yesterday, and I hear the neighbourhood is very lovely!"

"Ah, what a happy suggestion, Miss Maude! And that reminds me that I had an application to-day from—from a friend of mine. He is now in Germany, but is meditating a return to England, and he commissions me to look him out some picturesque house, where he may have ample scope to indulge his artistic tastes."

"And he is an artist, Mr. Street?" asked the girl.

"Yes; and will become very famous someday—will—will my young friend!"

Maude Raymond noted her companion's

hesitation, and the abrupt ending of his sentence, and asked no further questions, but merely remarked,—

"I do hope he is strong-minded enough not to believe in the return of spirits from their unseen world."

The grey-headed lawyer laughed.

"I have no fear that any spirit, seen or unseen, will alarm my young friend, Miss Maude. Judging from what I remember of him as a boy, he is much too matter-of-fact to be strong in the superstitious."

"I wish poor Mrs. Dent were more of his nature!" replied the girl, rising, and glancing out of the window down into the street below. "Ah, there is the carriage!" she exclaimed; "and now I must bid you good-bye, Mr. Street."

"Good morning, Miss Maude. Have been most delighted to see you!" returned her guardian, grasping cordially the daintily-gloved hand extended to him.

And then, as Maude Raymond passed the desk, strewn so thickly with its dry and uninteresting papers, something caught her eye—something so totally unlooked for there, among all that dry and musty correspondence, that the girl stopped; and, oblivious of all etiquette, took it up from its resting place, and scanned it eagerly with her lovely dark eyes.

"What a handsome face, and what glorious eyes!" she exclaimed, unconsciously.

Then remembering herself, she turned to where stood her guardian, and apologised, in her pretty way, for the great liberty she had taken.

A peculiar smile flitted across the face of her companion, as he quietly asked,—

"You agree with me that that is the likeness of a very handsome man, Miss Maude?"

"I do, indeed!" she replied, earnestly, continuing meanwhile to gaze on the photograph she held.

It was the likeness of a young man, probably of not more than three or four-and-twenty years of age.

The face itself was perfect. The noble-looking brow, surrounded by heavy clusters of dark hair, the well-shaped nose, the full and perfectly modelled lips, partially revealed beneath the heavy drooping moustache—all these were perfect, but the chief charm of the whole lay in the glorious and eloquent eyes that looked forth from their long lashes—the picture of a very handsome man—and a fascination seemed to enshroud it; for the girl, so earnestly regarding it, seemed loth to withdraw her gaze, while the grave man of business at her side interrupted not her lengthy perusal of the perfect features, but regarded her with a peculiar and well satisfied smile.

"That face will haunt me, Mr. Street, I am sure!" Maude Raymond exclaimed, as she at length, with a sigh, laid down the photograph. But still her gaze was attracted to it. "That reminds me, Mr. Street," she continued, "I have been thinking much of the condition attached to my father's will, and I have come to the conclusion that I would much rather relinquish the Manor House than contract a marriage with a man I do not—care for!"

Mr. Street smiled, then replied,—

"My dear Miss Maude, how can you possibly judge now of the state of your feelings towards your future husband, when, as yet, you have never met?"

"That is true, certainly, Mr. Street. But supposing, in the meantime, before this husband of mine appears—supposing I meet another, and learn to love that other—am I then to sacrifice all my feelings and turn away from such love and unite myself to a man whom I feel I shall never, never like?"

"Stay, Miss Maude. You are only uttering suppositions, after all said and done. Supposing now, on the other hand, that this future husband of yours—chosen for you by your late father—supposing he is possessed of handsome exterior, and of an equally noble and attractive mind—in fact, all that any young lady could desire—would you then

still refuse to link your destiny with his, and thus fulfil your dead parent's wish?"

The grey-headed lawyer spoke earnestly, and the young girl coloured slightly as she replied,—

"I suppose not in that case, Mr. Street. But another reason I have—I should not like to be loved, even by the handsomest of men, simply for what I possess. You understand, Mr. Street?"

"Perfectly, my dear Miss Maude; and I firmly believe that such will never be your case. I have known you from a child, remember, and your character is now what it was then, while your beauty alone—"

"No flattery, please, Mr. Street! Now I must be going, or Ellie will think I am lost. Good-bye, once again, Mr. Street!"

"Good morning, Miss Maude. I will not forget the tenant!"

"And I will not forget your friend's face," laughingly replied the girl, as she turned away to descend to the carriage.

A few moments later and she was sitting and listening to and discussing the respective merits of cashmere or merino for morning gowns; but her thoughts were far away in the meantime—far away from the subject she was thus apparently engrossed in; for the perfect face of her guardian's client in Germany still haunted her, and continued to do so for the remainder of that day.

That night, as she again sat at her chamber window, she recalled to her memory the eloquent eyes which had looked forth at her from the surrounding cardboard; and she felt that such must be the face of the man whom she could be induced to recognise as her husband.

"If it were not a foolish vow I would register it now this very moment!" she murmured, as she drew closer around her her costly dressing-gown, and leaned farther forth from her open window.

Outside all was hushed and still. The moon rode proudly along in the sky. The stars shone brightly, while from the garden below was wafted the faint essence of dewy rose and fragrant mignonette.

"Yes, I would vow that none other but the possessor of those perfect features and glorious eyes should be my husband. But it is a foolish vow, for he may already belong to another—this I hope not. Shall we ever meet? He far away now in Germany, with so many miles between us? I am afraid not!"

And then the dark eyes grew softer, while a sweet smile lurked around the small mouth as Maude Raymond thought of the face, seen for the first time that day, and wove sweet and fanciful dreamings anent it—sat on at her chamber window, dreaming this, till tired nature interposed, and she was finally fain to seek once again her couch.

CHAPTER II.

"LESTER, old fellow, I have heard the news!" "The news! What news?" asked Lester Frere, glancing up from the easel, before which he was seated, with a look of surprise.

"What news, Lester? Why, the saddest news (to me, at any rate) that I have heard for many a long day!" returned Max Kron, advancing still further into the room, and regarding with artistic-like glance the painting upon which his friend was engaged.

But the latter still looked mystified.

"Lester, old fellow, I shall miss you most of all!" quietly remarked Max Kron, presently, and as he spoke he laid a fair, bowed head upon his friend's shoulder, and looked down sadly.

"Ach, mein freund! So you, too, have heard of my departure for the land of my birth?" questioned Lester Frere.

"I have, Lester; and the news grieves me sorely! You see, you and I have always been such friends ever since you first came to this small town; and—and I shall miss you, old fellow! Must you really go? and so soon?"

"I must, Max. Business calls me, or else I

would willingly linger on here amid the hills and valleys, and among all my kind and good friends, of whom I hold none dearer than Max Kron!" answered Lester Frere, rising from his easel, and proceeding to criticise with an artist's eye the painting before him.

"Nice little bit that, eh, Max?" he asked presently.

"Very! One of your best, decidedly, Lester; but, if I may be allowed to suggest a slight alteration—"

Max Kron hesitated and stopped, waiting for permission before he ventured to point out what to him seemed a fault.

"You may be permitted to name any correction that you deem expedient," laughingly put in Lester Frere.

"Well, then, *mein freund*, if you remember the shade on the hills was not so intense that evening when you and I viewed them together? Do you recollect it, old fellow? and Elise was with us also. Ach!"

And a ponderous sigh broke from the fair-haired German as he turned away with a shake of his head.

"You are right, Max. I have made the atmosphere too bright, and I can't exactly recall the particular shade. What say you? Do you feel inclined to accompany me to that point once again before I bid farewell to these dear hills?"

"I will come," quietly replied Max Kron.

Half-an-hour later and the two artist-friends were stretched at full length upon the short, dry grass, while their eyes were intently fixed upon the scene—the distant blue hills.

"Beautiful light that!" exclaimed Lester Frere, presently.

"Very good; but not so decided as it was that night when Elise was here," replied Max Kron. Then asked abruptly,—

"Lester, have you seen her to-day?"

A flush dyed Lester Frere's cheeks for an instant, then quickly died away as he made answer carelessly,—

"Let me see. Yes, I believe we met down by the well this morning; but I really can't remember anything connected with our meeting. You see, one runs against the same people here in this small town so very often, that it is difficult to determine times and seasons."

Max Kron raised himself slightly on his elbow, and regarded his friend in astonishment.

"She will miss you as much as any of your friends, Lester," was all he said, but there was much implied in the tone.

"The little flaxen-haired coquette!" laughed the other, merrily; but there was a slight tinge of bitterness meanwhile.

"Oh, she may be coquette to some, old fellow, but not to all," sententiously responded Max Kron.

"She is welcome to play all her pretty tricks on me, Max, for I am proof against all such love making wiles."

"How so?"

"Ah, that reminds me. I have found you such a good, and true friend that I may as well confide in you the real reason why I am thus returning to my native land. But before I commence I must have a cigar to assist me."

The cigar was produced and placed between the young artist's lips; then, after drawing several good puffs, he continued,—

"You must know, Max, that there is a lady in the case."

"I thought so!" muttered the other, as he, too, puffed away.

"Yes; and a great deal of romance."

"Can't stand anything sentimental myself," again came the interruption from Lester Frere's listener.

"I am recalled by an old family solicitor to make love to a young lady whose father thought fit to choose as my future wife."

"And you approve of the choice? Is she handsome? Is she wealthy?" asked Max Kron.

"Three questions, all in one breath, my good fellow!" exclaimed the other, merrily. "Let me answer the first. Unfortunately the choice

does not lie with me. If the lady choose to discard me she is at perfect liberty to do so, only in such case she forfeits a large sum of money, and one of the finest old manor houses that England boasts of. That is all."

"If she discard you! You surely are not contemplating aught so insulting to your good looks, Lester Frere?" gravely inquired his companion.

The young artist laughed long and loudly.

"Unfortunately, women do not always allow their affections to be guided by fine eyes and a handsome figure! Still, I hope I may have a chance with the beautiful heiress."

"And you have never yet met?"

"No. Her father's will stipulated that I was to reside abroad till the young lady's education should be considered finished, and she herself fairly launched into society. Then it was deputed to her guardian to arrange the first meeting; and now the moment has arrived, and I am recalled to undergo the ordeal."

Something like a sigh escaped Lester Frere's listener, as the former ceased his tale, while a wistful look shone for an instant in Max Kron's eyes as he earnestly regarded the face of his friend.

"Poor Elise!" escaped his lips in low tones.

His companion shrugged his shoulders almost imperceptibly, while again the red flush appeared for a moment in his cheeks.

"Max, old fellow! Believe me, she is not to be pitied. Coquette she may appear to us, but I have seen more of her heart than she imagines. Yes! I hold the key to it; and—well, plainly speaking, if you could only unbend a little when in her presence, I think—Max! you love Elise?"

Max Kron threw away the stump of his cigar, but answered never a word, though a wistful and tender look crossed his face at his companion's words. But he was silent still—silent so long that the other, feeling he had spoken too plainly—spoken unadvisedly—stretched forth his hand, and grasping that of his friend, continued,—

"Max, old fellow! I beg your pardon; I did not mean to speak so plainly; but—"

"No apologies, Lester. I am not offended with you in the least. Only your words have set me a-thinking, and I did not feel inclined for speech just then. But you are right, Lester. Yes! You know full well that you are the only man I would confess this to—but, I do love her and she loves me not!"

Sadly spoken; while, again, the upward-breathed sigh testified to the heavy heart.

"Are you so certain that she loves you not? I called her coquette awhile since; but coquette though she may have been to me and others, yet, believe me, I speak what I know to be a certainty—she loves my friend, Max Kron! Nay! I should not speak thus positively on such a subject were I not assured of the truth of my words. How I gained my knowledge matters not; but a few words uttered by a woman, when she believes herself to be quite alone, are surely sufficient guarantee."

But still Max Kron shook his head sadly and despairingly—still the wistful look was on his face.

"I would give much to know that such is the case, Lester. Of course, old fellow, I do not doubt your word for an instant, but she may have changed since then."

The words were spoken so sadly that Lester Frere was fairly moved.

"Cheer up, Max!" he exclaimed. "And remember, when the hour arrives, and you hear from the young lady's own lips what I prophesy—you may hear it any moment that you choose to make trial—remember then in your hour of bliss that your friend was not mistaken, and wish him the same success. Now, I suppose, we had better be returning to the town. I am promised to two or three places before midnight."

So the friends rose up from their lounge on the short, dry grass, and, arm-in-arm, set off at a good pace on their return journey.

A tenant was found for the Manor House—none other than Mr. Street's young artist friend from Germany, and the facsimile of the likeness which had so fascinated and attracted Maude Raymond.

"It is a capital spot for you still to indulge your love of your palette and brushes, Dumont," Mr. Street had remarked at the interview that had taken place upon the artist's arrival in England, "and all the better for our plans too."

And the man of business rubbed his hands gleefully, while a look of satisfaction spread over his genial countenance.

And then had followed a lengthy discussion between the two men, with which we have nothing to do at present.

And now Lester Dumont is at the Manor House, and duly installed in the "ghostly" room, much to Mrs. Dent's vexation:

The latter has waxed eloquent upon the superior advantages respecting light and prospect of the other rooms at the Manor House, but Lester Dumont has been obstinate and deaf alike to her eloquence and persuasions, and has come off conqueror.

And behold him now seated in the "ghostly" room which has already attained somewhat of the nature of a studio.

A large easel occupies the centre of the apartment, while palettes and brushes are scattered around in true artist-like disregard of tidiness and order, and a large roll of canvas leans against the very panel through which the ghost is supposed to disappear on her way down the stone staircase.

Mrs. Dent sighs, but finds words and sighs alike to no purpose; so, at length, being, in a measure, reconciled to what she can't avoid, she becomes affable enough to the artist, and descends freely upon the beauty and goodness of her young mistress—the owner of the grand old Manor House—while Lester Dumont paints away, almost indifferently, seemingly, to his garrulous companion; but, nevertheless, drinking in greedily every word.

Her beauty has been much extolled, but here Mrs. Dent's eloquence is insufficient and inadequate, and Lester Dumont has but a hazy picture of his chosen bride's loveliness. Dark eyes, beautiful wavy brown hair, pretty figure.

But Mrs. Dent cannot give what the artist most requires—the expression of the countenance; and so he must wait till the opportunity shall arrive when he may meet her.

And so he sits painting at his easel, thinking much of the fair owner of the Manor House, and—waits.

CHAPTER III.

It was a glorious day in early August.

"Just the day for a picnic!" as had been voted repeatedly by each and all of the numerous party Mrs. Clements had gathered together in Yelham Woods for her annual picnic. The season was nearly over, so that the assemblage was a numerous and aristocratic one.

Fair faces, charming dresses, good-looking men; and, to crown all, a lively and most indefatigable hostess. Such a picnic was sure to prove a success!

But among the fair beauties gathered there beneath the grand old beeches—and there were many such—none attracted such universal attention and homage as Maude Raymond, the beautiful heiress.

Attired in one of Worth's own marvellous and artistic costumes, she passed hither and thither with graceful steps and smiling face.

But even as she smiled and returned wit for wit, her thoughts were elsewhere.

Ever and anon, as she received the proffered attentions of those whom she knew would willingly exchange the respectful demeanour and partially concealed admiration for something a little warmer, her memory reverted to the face seen but once; but oh! how it haunted her!

"If he were only here!" she repeated

mentally, for the hundredth time, as she rose with the others from the informal repast designated "luncheon" by their charming hostess.

Then the party broke up into little detachments of twos and threes, and prepared to disperse in every direction.

"Miss Raymond, I am afraid you are tired?"

The tone, the words, were those of one of the beautiful heiress's most ardent admirers.

Yes. Arthur Lascelles alone had noted—taught from love's own page—the abstracted look that stole from time to time over the fair face of Maude Raymond—noted the wistful, sad look that would creep into the lovely dark eyes, even as she joined in the gay badinage and merry laughter around her.

But the lover's quick glance had detected the weariness that vented itself in the upheaval, slight though it was, of the rich lace adorning her bodice, the faint motion as though of a half-suppressed sigh.

Yes, Arthur Lascelles noted it all, and a pang of jealousy shot through his heart. And yet he knew his case to be hopeless!

He, a younger son of an impoverished family, thus aspiring to wed with the beautiful heiress—the belle of the season! And yet he had dared to fondly dream that he might yet win her.

"You are tired, Miss Raymond?" he repeated, as he again noted the abstracted look stealing over the fair face of the girl he so fondly—so hopelessly—loved!

Maude Raymond glanced up with her dark eyes, and smilingly replied,—

"I believe I am. The sun is so powerful. Do you not find it so, Mr. Lascelles?"

"I do, Miss Raymond; and if you will allow me, I will take you to a delightfully cool spot not far from here. Will you come?"

"Willingly. I so long for some shade and shelter from this burning sun," replied the girl, as she turned away, with Arthur Lascelles at her side.

A few moments' walking brought the couple to the banks of a small stream.

"What a charming spot! I am so much obliged to you for bringing me to such a lovely spot. Shall we rest here awhile?"

"Certainly, if you wish it, Miss Raymond. But I will fetch a camp-stool if you will not mind waiting here alone for a few minutes, Miss Raymond."

"It is too good of you! But pray do not hurry on my account; I shall employ the time in exploring the stream a little farther up," replied Maude Raymond, waving an adieu to her companion as he turned away in quest of a camp-stool.

Left thus alone, the girl watched the retreating figure of her escort, and smiled faintly as he turned from time to time, and waved an adieu to her.

At length the intervening bushes hid him from her gaze, and then slowly the smile died away from the pretty red lips, as with a deep-drawn sigh the girl wandered on for a few yards further up the stream.

The bushes became thicker and thicker here, and it was with some difficulty that she could at places gain a passage through them, and that not without destruction to her dress.

But still an inward impulse compelled her to go forward, till, finally, she sank, tired and weary, down by the side of the little stream.

Tall fox-gloves reared their heads and tossed their pink bells all around her. But she heeded them not, so deeply was she lost in her own reflections.

And these? They were both sweet and sad, and were called forth by the remembrance of the photograph lying amid the business papers in her guardian's office.

She could not put away from her the "glorious eyes" that so haunted her. And she only longed to meet him. And yet that seemed so impossible, when Mr. Street had said that he was in Germany.

But still the wish grew more and more intense as she sat on, listening to the soft murmur of the trickling stream, and watching

the mid nodding of the fox-gloves' purple heads.

All was hushed and still around her, and, believing herself to be quite alone, she suddenly covered her face with both her hands and exclaimed,—

"Oh, that he were here!"

Scarcely had the words left her lips than a slight rustling among the bushes at her left made her uncover her face, and start quickly from her lounging position, and glance hastily around.

The brown and tanned face of a young gipsy girl, with yellow bound head and bright glittering eyes peering forth from the bushes, confronted her.

For an instant the thought of flight, or of uttering a cry for help, flashed through her brain. The next, and she had drawn herself proudly up, and demanded, in an imperative tone,—

"What do you want?"

The face disappeared for a second; the next, and the gipsy maiden stood close to the beautiful heiress.

What a picture for an artist they formed!

The latter (the heiress), with dark eyes, and delicate lace-betrimmed costume. The gipsy, with short scarlet petticoat, plaid bodice, and yellow-bound head.

"What do you want?" again demanded Maude Raymond.

"Ah, beautiful lady! do not be angry with the poor gipsy maiden! Only let me see your fair hand, and I will tell you all about him—the dark gentleman whom you love so well, but whom you have never seen!"

Maude Raymond started, while a hot blush stole over her face.

The gipsy was quick to note the effect her words had had, and advancing nearer whispered,—

"But you must come away from here, or the other gentleman may return; and he may not like to find you in company with a poor gipsy. Will you come, fair lady, and I will tell you all about him? You have never met him yet, but the time is not far distant!"

So pleaded the girl, as she stood there before the fair heiress in the chequered light.

For a second Maude Raymond stood pondering whether she should listen to what the gipsy would tell her of the man she so longed to meet. Her companion was quick to note the hesitation, and again commenced her pleading in still more persuasive, if not less whining tones.

"Fair lady, do not hesitate. See yonder, through those bushes, there returns your friend. Quick, follow me! I have much I can tell you, and I only ask a little in return!"

The heiress looked, and distinctly saw the form of Arthur Lascelles coming quickly towards the spot, encumbered by a camp-stool and a good-sized umbrella, intended evidently for her comfort. Before her eyes arose the vision also of that other face, seen but once only; but, oh! how vividly the features were retained on her memory! The thought of it decided her at once. With a proud look on her face, and a haughty—

"I will follow you, woman; only remember, I trust you implicitly," she followed the gipsy, who quickly plunged through some neighbouring bushes, holding them courteously and gracefully aside, so that her companion's light and fragile attire might not suffer from the thorns. At length she stopped, and turning to Maude Raymond, said,—

"We are safe here from interruption. You needn't fear me, gentle lady, Palma has often been trusted before, and she has never been found wanting."

"I do not doubt you either," Maude Raymond replied. "Now tell me all you know quickly, for I must return to my friends, or they may miss me; and should they find me here, they—"

"Never fear that, fair lady! But I will tell you all. Let me cross your palm with gold; yes, it must be gold, lady. Palma

would not ask it for herself, but she has a sister who is dying, and they say she must have wine and other things that are hard for a poor gipsy-girl to get, and she will not touch them if they are stolen."

Maude Raymond drew forth her dainty purse, and taking a shilling piece from it, handed it to the girl, whose dark eyes were now glittering with unfeigned tears.

"Thank you, lady! thank you! May you be very, very happy with the dark gentleman. He will soon come, and when once you meet all will be happiness for both. But the place of meeting will be a strange one, and at a strange hour. Listen! One night, when the clock strikes twelve, you will press the little ivory knob; the panel will slide back; you will pass through, down the dark passage and out into the clear moonlight. And then—then, by the rustic bridge, you will meet your fate. The dark gentleman will be there, and then soon will follow a gay wedding!"

The whining voice ceased; the brown fingers were busy knotting up the coin in the corner of her handkerchief.

Maude Raymond stood transfixed. She had never believed in the gipsy's art of fortune-telling, any more than she had in the wanderings of beings from the spirit land; but, certainly, all that this girl had told her was probable enough. And then the ivory knob, the subterranean passage, the rustic bridge! How could she have acquired so much knowledge respecting the Manor House?

"Strange, very?" she mused, as she stood with eyes fixed on the ground, totally unconscious of her companion's movements; for, chancing to raise her eyes to further question the gipsy, what was her astonishment to find that she was alone!

How was she to find her way back to her friends? A low cry of alarm escaped her as she turned away to plunge once more into the thicket through which she fancied she had come.

Suddenly, a rustling sound behind her caused her to glance anxiously around, fearful of encountering some enemy. But, instead—

Oh, how can be described the emotion that filled her breast, as her astonished gaze fell on the countenance of the very man whom she so longed to win!

Yes! There, hat in hand, bowing low, with a sweet smile on the perfectly-modelled lips, and a dangerously fascinating light in the glorious dark eyes, stood the *facsimile* of the photograph.

She stood scarlet and mute before this man whose form and image had so completely taken possession of her heart from the first moment her gaze had rested on it—stood scarlet and mute till roused by his voice—a voice so perfectly suited to the face—saying in deferential tones,—

"Pardon me, but if I can be of any service, I shall be more than delighted to render it!"

Then she remembered herself, and returning his bow, replied somewhat confusedly,—

"Thank you; you are very kind. I have unfortunately wandered from my party, and am at a loss how to return to them. These English thickets are so difficult to penetrate."

"Yes!" her companion replied. "I have found them so too. But I think I can restore you to your friends without putting you to the inconvenience of again passing through the briars. I have just seen a gentleman bearing a camp-stool. He seemed in quest of some one. Probably he may belong to your party?"

"Yes! That must be Mr. Lascelles. Please take me to him. He will think I am lost."

The stranger looked disappointed for a moment, then quickly recovered himself, and begged her to trust to his guidance, and he would bring her to the spot where he had last seen her friend.

As they passed along, side by side, he told her a little of himself—that he was an artist;

that he had lately returned from Germany, and so forth.

Maude Raymond's heart swelled within her as she listened to the soft, mellow voice, and ever and anon met the tender light in the glorious eyes.

Suddenly, there appeared before them Arthur Lascelles, and it was almost with a pang of disappointment that the girl turned to greet him, though her words belied her true feelings. With a courteous bow the stranger responded to the thanks that were showered upon him by both, and then he left them to resume his painting.

Meanwhile, Maude Raymond turned away with Arthur Lascelles, and answered merrily his numerous questions respecting her straying away.

"I must apologise, I know, Mr. Lascelles," she said, in such a pretty way, and in such a charming manner, that the young man blushed to his very temples with pleasure, and forgave her on the spot.

"But," she continued, "I could not resist the temptation to wander away. It was all so beautiful, and I wanted to follow that dear little brook a little further. But it was not nearly so pretty, after all, and the thorns were terrible. See, here!" and she daintily held up several streamers of lace produced by the same "terrible thorns."

"I am only glad that you are found again, Miss Raymond," Arthur Lascelles answered, earnestly.

A determined look was on his face as he added hurriedly, in a voice that trembled slightly,—

"Oh! Miss Raymond, what should I have done had you really been lost to us—to me?"

A shiver passed over the girl's frame as the thought of the face and figure she had met so lately, and had parted from so quickly. She dreaded what was to follow. She knew she could offer no stray crumbs of comfort and hope to this young man, whom she knew loved her passionately—as passionately, she whispered to herself, as she loved another, and almost as hopelessly.

And yet not hopelessly in her case, if she might believe the gipsy's words.

That last thought reassured her, so turning herself towards him, she replied in a mocking tone, which smote like a death-knell on Arthur Lascelles' fairest hopes.—

"Really, Mr. Lascelles, that is a question much too serious for me to answer. And see! here comes dear Elliot! I must hasten to her and tell her of my late adventure!"

So the pic-nic came to an end.

The hot July day had been fraught with much to two of the party, who were all so unanimously profuse in their expressions of delight at the charming day they had spent.

But by two of the party the words were uttered indeed, but unattended by any of the feelings that should attend the conventional phrase.

Arthur Lascelles felt he should ever remember that day. From henceforth the sun had set for him; the scent of flowers and the song of birds were as things of naught to him, now that his fair young love-dream had vanished.

Sadly he recognised the bitter fact that he must henceforth plod calmly along the desert pathway of life alone; and it was a cruel and crushing thought to the young barrister, who had given his whole heart to the beautiful owner of the Manor House.

And what of the other?

Mrs. Elliot found her charge very silent and very abstracted that same evening during the rather lengthy drive home. The good old lady wondered at it, for she had hoped that the day in the woods, spent in pleasant society, would have rallied her from the somewhat dreary state into which she had fallen of late. She attributed it to the effects of the ghost-story heard from Mrs. Dent, and more than once blamed herself for not having been more firm in preventing the dark passage being disclosed to view.

Many a sigh escaped the gentle lady as she

noted the listless, aimless wandering from object to object, of her fair charge as they waited, later on, for the hour of retiring. But the heiress's whole nature had been strangely thrilled that day, and she could scarcely throw aside the spell sufficiently to be true to her usual affectionate, genial manner towards her kind friend and adviser.

It was, therefore, a relief to her when that same friend pleaded a slight headache, consequent upon the excessive heat, and retired to her own room, there to shed a few tears over her charge's altered behaviour.

Thus left alone Maude Raymond's thoughts naturally had free vent for the strange event of the day.

Again and again the gipsy's words occurred to her, and as she pondered on them, the more confused and perplexed she became as to when and how the girl had acquired her knowledge of the subterranean passage.

But each time, out of the troubled, puzzling mist, there rose the form and image of the stranger artist—the original of the photograph, and for the time being all else faded from her memory—so powerful in the all pervading flame of love which glides our lives assuages our griefs, and is, in fact, the very quintessence of mortal existence.

So the days sped on.

As each morn broke, fair, fresh, and cool, Maude Raymond asked herself whether she should see him again; and as every eve fell, with its soft refreshing dew, she whispered words of hope to her fainting heart, and the intense longing for another word from the mellow tones—another glance from the glorious eyes—grew stronger and stronger.

CHAPTER IV.

"My dear, I now consider it high time that those two young people meet."

No reply being audible, Mr. Street put down the newspaper he had been reading, and glanced across to that corner of the room where, ensconced in a low easy-chair drawn close to the fire, sat—and slept—his wife.

"Oh, I must wait awhile, I suppose, to discuss my plans," he murmured, as he glanced down at the sleeping countenance, and then he fell into a train of reflections respecting business matters.

Once during his reverie his eyes rested on a small settle opposite him, upon which was placed a handsome photograph-stand.

"Ah, Lester, my boy, you will be considered one of the most enviable and one of the luckiest of men with such a prize as will be yours! And then, my fair ward, when once you have met this Adonia I shall hear no more fine speeches from your pretty red lips relating to relinquishing the old Manor House and so forth. Love must be kindled within your heart at the first glance bestowed on you from those handsome eyes. How I long for the moment to arrive, so that I may indeed prove a true prophet. And then, Lester Frere—"

"What about Lester Frere, my dear? Is he here?" interrupted a voice from the fireside.

Mr. Street laughed aloud as he again crossed the room, and, drawing a chair close to that in which reclined his gentle wife, he seated himself at her side.

"Lester Frere is not here, then?" she continued. "I thought I heard you speaking of him."

"So I was, my dear," replied her husband; "but only to an imaginary Lester Frere, or rather to his photograph. But my dear, are you wide awake now?"

"I believe so, my dear. I spoke to you a few minutes since, but received no response, therefore I concluded you must have been under the influence of the drowsy-headed Morpheus. Otherwise you would not have been deaf to my remark."

"No. I must have been asleep, I suppose, Hugh. But now what is it you want me to listen to?"

"I have been thinking in my own mind, my dear, that it is high time that those two

young people meet, and that they meet here for the first time. Now, Mrs. Street, what do you say to my plan?"

"I quite agree with you, Hugh. You see it would be such an unfortunate thing, supposing she should fall in love with another before seeing Lester."

"Her very own idea, my dear! Yes, I remember when she called to see me at my office respecting a tenant for the Manor House that she herself used that argument. Poor little Maude! I was sorely tempted then to tell her the name of the man whose photograph I could so well see had so taken her fancy; and, in fact, had made so deep an impression upon her. You see, knowing what we do of her character, she is not one to be awayed by little things. No! If she were to fall in love with a man, no matter whether he be prince or beggar, all would be sacrificed to that love. So that, all things considered, I consider it my duty to bring about a meeting between the two."

As Mr. Street concluded he turned his head, and looked earnestly down into his wife's face.

The latter smiled sweetly as she returned the look; then putting forth her hand, so that it might rest in her husband's, she said, in low tones,—

"Hugh, you remember how our happiness was once being nearly wrecked?"

"My dear, do not let us talk of the past!" replied the lawyer, clasping the small white hand that lay so passively within his.

"I very often think of it, Hugh; but not in sadness; only in thankfulness that I was then allowed to use my heart's truest feelings, and so secure to myself a good and loving husband at a time when, if I had wavered but for an instant, I might have blighted my whole life's happiness, and just merely for the sake of a few more hundreds a-year, and an empty title. Ah, I cannot but be too thankful that I was true to myself in those days!"

"My dear wife was sorely tried, I know; but I hope she has had her reward," replied the lawyer.

"My reward? Yes! Ten thousand times over!" earnestly replied his wife, as she looked up lovingly into her husband's face. "For what greater reward can any woman desire for any little sacrifice that she may make than to be ever at the side of a noble and loving husband!"

"Heaven knows I have tried to make all the recompense that lay in my power to you, my dear wife," said the lawyer, laying his lips on the small, white hand he held with his own.

Silence fell for a few minutes, while husband and wife sat, on and thought his or her thoughts.

His reverted back to that summer time when he had secretly courted the woman now sitting at his side—secretly, for was she not an heiress, and was not he then very poor?

Here flow swiftly back to that same summer time when the days seemed golden indeed, as she stood 'neath the rustling beeches surrounding her ancestral home, and listed to the grave, but loving, tones of her lover. And then came the hour—the moment—when she must decide whether wealth or love was to be hers.

And she had chosen the latter, even though he was near enough inhabiting the proverbial cottage; and she had never regretted her choice. Never!

"My dear, when shall we have them?" asked her husband, presently.

"One day next week will be convenient to me, Hugh. Any day that you like."

"Then shall we say Wednesday next, my dear? And we can ask a few others as well, so as to give those two greater opportunity to steal away to the conservatory without fear of being so particularly noticed. By-the-by, I wonder if Miller has remembered to attend to my new fern? I put it quite away in the shade this morning, and he may not have noticed it. I must go and see to it."

"And while you are gone I will make out a list of people to ask for Wednesday, and also

plan out a menu," replied the wife, as her husband rose and prepared to leave the room to see to the welfare of his latest purchase for his conservatory.

CHAPTER V.

LESTER DUMONT was alone with his easel and brush in the oak parlour. His hands were idle at present, for the deepening twilight was against his work. His hands were idle, but not his thoughts—far from it. From the canvas stretched in front of him appeared the well-shaped head, the very hair, the dark eyes, of Maude Raymond, though he knew her not by that name. His own glorious orbs were fixed on the sweet-looking face as he leaned back idly in his chair. He smiled to himself as he dreamed his own sweet dream—a dream in which two figures—his own and this other—were wandering together through the beautiful grounds which he could so plainly see through the open window.

Smiled as he dreamed of the sweet red lips upturned to meet his own, Ah! delicious moments! But the dream, with all its fair imagery, vanished, as the cruel fact presented itself to his mind—the bare, cruel fact that he did not know the name of this beautiful girl whom he had learnt to love so well, though but one short meeting had taken place between them.

A sigh escaped him, as he thought also of the hopelessness of his longing and yearning for this fair maiden, whose picture he had so faithfully produced on the canvas opposite him—a proof of how love can also strengthen the powers of memory.

Hopeless he knew his longing to be in one sense; for, was he not bound in honour to another till the word was spoken to release him?

Yes, he acknowledged it all, but still the fact was powerless to keep him from loving the strange beauty whose face and form had captivated him at one encounter.

So he sat there still, with the shadows ever deepening, the singing of the birds gradually subsiding into the occasional "chirp, chirp," as each feathered songster sought its retreat for the coming night—sat on still! The stars came out overhead, and the cool dew descended on the hot earth, and lulled nature's tired-out children to sleep.

He sat on wondering over many things, and thinking not a little of the sad tale connected with the very room which he now occupied. He pictured the ghost to himself as bearing the same face and form of the girl he had portrayed on his canvas—pictured it thus, and knew not for an instant how near he was to the mark.

Had he known it, he would then have been at the picturesque villa at Richmond, kneeling at the feet of his idol shrine, pleading in his mellow tones for the right to love and be loved in return.

Meanwhile he must be content with the riches memory threw in his way, and pass the long summer evenings in weaving bright hopes and fancies of the future, should it ever be his lot to hold the loved one in his arms, and rain sweet kisses on her soft cheeks.

Lights were brought, windows were closed; all the sweet scent of flowers shut out, and with the former disappeared all the illusory dreams in which he had been indulging. Soon after Mrs. Dent appeared, bearing on a salver a single envelope.

Lester Dumont took it up carelessly enough, and laid it down beside him, while he detained the housekeeper to indulge in a little harmless gossip. Had he known what the contents of the neglected letter were to bring him of happiness, it is scarcely probable he would have been content to delay one moment before opening it.

But so it often is in life. Our greatest joys, our supremest moments of bliss come, thus to us unawares, and we treat them as of little or no moment till fully aroused to examine them closely, or till we have to part suddenly from them.

At length Mrs. Dent remembered her supper, and Lester Dumont thought of his evening pipe. This latter article lay in close proximity to the discarded letter, therefore it was but natural that his eye should fall on the latter.

Mrs. Dent being gone he took it up carelessly, muttering to himself, "From Street," and then proceeded to open it leisurely with his penknife.

The few short sentences, written in the solicitor's businesslike hand, did not give him much pleasure, at least judging by the slight frown that momentarily crossed his brow. For the invitation to attend a dinner-party, at which the fair owner of the Manor House was to be present, brought no feeling of pleasure to him. Still he felt he must not refuse, neither must he neglect to furnish a portfolio with one of his latest sketches of the Manor House and its surroundings. His aim then was to be brought into full play to help amuse the fair owner, of whom he had heard so much from her devoted housekeeper.

Wednesday was the day named, and the hour seven. So the intervening time was devoted to touching up the unfinished work, and placing the same carefully in an artistic-looking receptacle. At the close of this part of his task a sudden whim seized him to devote a place in the same to the face and form of the beautiful girl whose dark beauty had made such sad havoc on his heart. Yes, he decided he would take it to act as a talisman in case the charms of Maude Raymond, the lovely heiress, should prove powerful enough to sway him for a moment from his allegiance to the fair unknown.

"Ah, Dumont, am glad to see you here! But you are very late," was Mr. Street's greeting to his guest, as the latter advanced up the long and brilliantly lit drawing-room just as the clock was striking the hour of seven on the night of the dinner-party.

"Am I late?" inquired Lester Dumont, letting his eyes rove round the room meanwhile, as though in search of someone.

"Late? My dear fellow, what a question, when I have been looking out for you for the last half-an-hour! And now you have lost your chance, for the present, at any rate," the genial host added, with a glance and a smile in the direction where stood a young lady daintily robed in pure soft white lace. Her face was turned partially away from the advancing couple, as she laughed and chatted with an elderly man, who seemed all too pleased and delighted to find himself her companion for the time.

"Ah, then I am indeed sorry!" replied Lester Dumont, as his host's glance made him understand his implied meaning.

"But let me introduce you to one another, at any rate," continued the latter, as they now reached the end of the room.

"Miss Raymond," he went on, approaching the young lady in white, "may I introduce an old friend of mine to you? Mr. Lester Dumont—Miss Maude Raymond."

The girl turned slowly, and gave one careless glance in the direction of her host's "old friend."

He, too, glanced up; their eyes met. What a thrill passed through the frame of each, as this mutual recognition took place!

But there was no time then for further conversation, as at that moment the signal was given, and the party sallied forth into the dining-room, Maude Raymond upon the arm of the elderly man and Lester Dumont following in her wake with a "would-be young" lady all radiant in vivid green satin and flaxen ringlets.

The dinner passed by merrily enough, but two of the party were secretly chafing at the long parade of the many courses, and longed for the time when they should be free to converse apart.

Lester Dumont was obliged to smile and answer his companion's nervous questions respecting his ideas on government questions,

and so forth, as cheerily as his feelings would allow him, and content himself with an occasional glance across the table to where sat the lovely girl whom he had met but once before, but to whom his whole heart had been given, regardless of consequences.

He flattered himself that she returned these glances, and that, when this was the case, he fancied a deeper shade mantled in her cheeks, and that her eyes drooped prettily before his ardent gaze.

At last the signal to return to the drawing-room was given by the hostess, and the ladies passed out. A few minutes later and Lester Dumont found himself leaning against the crimson curtains which, in a measure, formed a screen around the deep embrasure where reclined the beautiful mistress of his present residence.

She was alone; and, as he approached, her large dark eyes had been raised to his, then quickly lowered, while a vivid blush overspread her face. He knew now that the girl whom he had met in Yelham Woods, and whom he had so secretly worshipped ever since, was one and the same with the beautiful heiress, Maude Raymond, of whom he had heard somewhat from his friend Mr. Street.

But this knowledge had brought him great joy; for—

But that was his secret!

And so he stood and looked down and noted the varying expressions sweeping across the lovely countenance so near him.

She seemed conscious of his presence there; and yet, strange to relate of her, so accustomed to the world's meaningless "nothings," she maintained a studied silence.

Only the ever-changing shade of carmine in her oval cheeks, and the constant plucking at the bouquet of stephanotis which she carried, betrayed her.

And then Lester Dumont, noting that her companion of the table was just entering, and fearful lest he should intrude upon them, spoke—only a few common-place words, suggested by the restless employment of the small gloved hands before him. Only that!

But the girl to whom they were addressed was quick to note the suppressed agitation in the speaker's voice. Glancing up with her dark eyes, she laughingly replied to his question,—

"Am I fond of flowers, Mr. Dumont? Yes, I am—passionately. But one would not judge so to see the destruction and havoc that I am causing this dear, sweet stephanotis. Ah! there goes a large spray!"

As Maude Raymond spoke she bent her head and put forth one hand to stay the sweet and fragrant spray of pure white blossoms which her fingers had just detached from their resting-place amid the cool green maidenhair fern.

But Lester Dumont was before her. His fingers closed upon the blossoms, and with a low bow and glance which seemed to ask permission to keep the same he laid the spray on the lace folds of her white dress.

"Thank you so much, Mr. Dumont. I will try and replace it where it was before, and keep my fingers from further destruction."

"Such lovely looking blossoms are certainly worthy of a better fate," quietly remarked her companion, then added: "Perhaps you have not yet seen Mr. Street's flowers and ferns? No? Then may I be allowed to be your escort? I can promise you that you will not be disappointed. Will you come, Miss Raymond?"

Silently, and merely bowing slightly in acquiescence, the lovely heiress rose, and placing her small gloved fingers on her companion's arm, allowed him to lead her away in the direction of the lawyer's conservatory.

This was the man of business' one recreation, and it was fully worthy of the repeated encomiums that it received from visitors. It was very spacious, with here and there a softly splashing fountain arising amid a perfect forest of palms and other exotics.

Rustic seats were dispersed here and there, and in such a manner that their occupants could not be seen by other promenaders.

"What a charming place, Mr. Dumont!" exclaimed the heiress, as she stopped in front of a huge bank of heliotrope and tea-roses.

"I am so glad you admire it, Miss Raymond! When I come to see our host I always make my way here at once and pay my court to all these sweet blossoms."

"But you have but just come from Germany, I believe, Mr. Dumont?"

"Yes. I have spent many years there now, Miss Raymond. I only returned a few months since; and at present I am your faithful tenant of the Manor House," Lester Dumont concluded, bowing and smiling, as he let his gaze fall on his lovely companion.

"Please don't mention the Manor House!" exclaimed the girl, while a shadow crossed her fair face.

"I am sorry if I have spoken of anything unpleasant to Miss Raymond; but to me everything connected with the—with my present residence—seems so fraught with beauty and happiness, that I am already deeply in love with the old place!"

A sigh broke from the girl at his side as Lester Dumont concluded, while, disengaging her hand from her companion's arm, she suddenly leant forward and buried her face in a perfect mass of fragrant heliotrope, while a puzzled look stole over Lester Dumont's handsome countenance as he watched her.

Silence fell then for a few minutes, during which Maude Raymond wandered restlessly to and fro from heliotrope to tea-rose, while ever and anon a slight sigh escaped her.

"You will wonder greatly, I daresay, Mr. Dumont, at my exhibiting such great dislike to your present abode?" she said presently, stopping and confronting him with her large, dark eyes.

"I must confess I am rather puzzled for a reason, Miss Raymond. The house itself is delightfully quiet, and the grounds are so lovely, that at first, I must repeat, I am puzzled to assign a cause why the same should be displeasing to you!"

Lester Dumont's quick and earnest gaze again scrutinized the lovely face at his side, but no response came from the red lips. Her dark eyes bent themselves studiously on the waxen flowers of her bouquet, and again her fingers commenced plucking nervously at the blossoms. Once again the spray became detached from its fern, and it fell at Lester Dumont's feet, and there lay, gleaming white against the dark mosaic tiles.

"My poor, dear flowers!" she murmured then, and looked at her companion.

He stooped low and gathered them up from their lowly resting-place.

Then, acting on the impulse of the moment, he raised the waxen petals to his lips; then handed them to her with one swift, impassioned glance from his glorious eyes.

She blushed crimson as she received them from him; but this time she did not replace them among the fern, but held them delicately between her gloved fingers.

Both stood silently waiting for the other to speak first—both hearts full and overflowing with feelings that only love can impart—both silent; both deeply agitated.

He was the first to break the silence.

Drawing a little nearer, and lowering his dark head, he said lightly—and yet there was such a ring of passion in his tones,—

"Miss Raymond, would you deem it great presumption if I begged some slight token from you, one trifle, to bear away with me in memory of this present happy time spent here with you amid these lovely flowers?"

A slight rustling of the lace on her bodice and a deeper tinge in her cheeks, were the only signs by which he could tell that she was even listening, so wrapt up in her flowers she seemed.

"Miss Raymond, I grant that it is great presumption on my part; but if it were only one single petal—one single leaf from the ferns you carry—I would cherish it in memory of the short spell of bliss allowed

me in company with one whom I could almost wish fate had willed I should never meet!"

The passionate ring in his voice made her glance up then; and in that one glance she allowed all her soul to be read by her companion.

But still silently she stood, only now she gently held forth the spray of stephanotis.

Lester Dumont took it from her, and placing it carefully away after once again raising it to his lips, he exclaimed again,—

"Yes; I would that fate had never willed that we should meet!"

"Why?" the sound was almost inaudible, but Lester Dumont caught it.

"Because there is no hope for me that this one meeting may be followed by others, Miss Raymond, though I could wish it were otherwise, with all my heart. But I am not free to choose for myself."

"We are alike then, Mr. Dumont?" murmured the girl, softly.

"Yes! Ah! I have heard the story from—a friend, Miss Raymond. But still there is hope for you," Lester Dumont continued, glancing keenly down at the girl at his side.

"How?" she questioned eagerly, slightly raising her dark eyes, and letting them rest on the grey ones so anxiously watching her.

"You are not obliged to marry the man."

"No! But I shall have to forfeit the Manor House and a large sum of money."

"But you would not mind that?"

"No! a thousand times, no! I would never bind myself to a man and thus make myself miserable just for the sake of a venerable old pile and a few hundreds. Never! I will sacrifice all, for I feel I can never marry that man now!"

The last word spoken ever so softly, as though not intended for her companion; but he heard it, nevertheless, and something like a look of pleasure and triumph flashed over his face.

Ah! how he longed to clasp that lovely form in his arms, and pour forth into her ear his passionate avowal of love! But he restrained himself by a mighty effort, and replied,—

"And I, too, feel that my task will be harder now that I have met you, Miss Raymond."

A quick uplifting of the lace on her bodice, a brief clasping of her gloved fingers, and then she asked,—

"You have seen this woman whom you are to marry?"

"Yes!"

"She is beautiful?"

"Very, very beautiful, Miss Raymond."

"And you love her?" spoken in quick, agitated tones as though ashamed to put the question.

But she felt compelled to do so. She was carried away by the ugly green demon, and could not bear that this man, whom she so passionately loved, should confess to loving another.

"Miss Raymond, how is it possible that I can love one whom I have seen but once?"

A little sigh of relief came from the girl's heart. Then she turned her head and glanced round at the scene before her.

"Miss Raymond!"

She was all attention again.

"Miss Raymond! pardon me, but—do you love this man to whom you are promised?"

The colour faded from her cheeks, while large tears welled into the beautiful dark eyes, as, clasping her hands, she glanced up into the glowing eyes regarding her so intently, and replied,—

"Love him! oh, no. I am sure I never can now!"

If the words themselves, and the stress on the last little word were not sufficient to prove the sincerity of her avowal, the mute, appealing glance was more than sufficient.

All unconsciously she had laid bare her very soul to this man whom she had met but once, but whom she so loved!

And he? Again the impulse to clasp her to

his heart was nearly overcomng him, but he put it aside, and only remarked quietly,—

"Fate has been unkind to us both, Miss Raymond; but, who knows, perhaps—perhaps she may be kinder to us in the future?"

Softly spoken, and with head lowered to a close proximity to the pretty one, bending again over the fragrant blossoms.

A deep sigh was the girl's only reply.

And then came an interruption in the person of the host himself, who came as an ambassador from the rest of the company to beg that the artist would show them his sketches.

And so the trio turned away to rejoin the others. Loud murmurs of praise and admiration arose on all sides as Lester Dumont drew forth sketch after sketch, and held it up for inspection, while Maude Raymond stood near at hand, and gazed with deeper aversion than ever upon the drawings, of the place to which she had taken such a great dislike—a dislike which had been greatly increased by her late interview with the artist.

Stooping forward to look at the one now being exhibited, her glance fell on the open portfolio.

Face upwards, and lying on the next painting, was the photograph of a young girl—a young girl, with pretty smiling mouth and large eyes. Maude Raymond's cheeks paled as she looked on it for an instant only. The next and the owner of it had noticed it, and quietly picked it up and put it away in his pocket; but not before his glance had met that of the beautiful heiress—a glance which brought the hot colour to his brow, and caused her to turn away to hide her emotion. And so the evening wore away, and the time for dispersing arrived.

One long, lingering clasp of the hand, and then Maude Raymond and Lester Dumont bade farewell to each other for many a long day.

CHAPTER VI.

"Max, old fellow, I am delighted to see you!"

"And I you, Lester! But how thin and pale you look!"

"Do I? Ah! well I have had a navy's touch of something or the other, and it has pulled me down a good bit. But sit down, mein friend, and take a weed with me. Your presence alone makes me feel better!"

"Ach, that sounds good!" replied the fair-haired German, as he wheeled forward a low chair for himself, and picked out a cigar from the open box proffered him by his friend.

A few minutes' silence, while both were busily occupied in manipulating and lighting their cigars preparatory to a good smoke; then Lester Dumont spoke.

"And Elise, Max? I was so glad to get the letter and the photograph!"

A deep flush spread itself all over the German's fair countenance as he looked up and caught the merry twinkle in the eyes regarding him.

"Ach, mein Elise!" he murmured, softly.

His companion laughed softly as he continued,—

"No need for me to ask further, Max, old fellow! I was a true prophet, you see, that day on the hill-sides, only—"

"Only it was too much for me to believe," interrupted Max Kron.

"I believe you were jealous of me in those days, Max?"

"No, no; not jealous, only I always acknowledged to myself the greater advantage of personal attraction that you possessed. And you know, Lester, that such influence has much to do with winning a maiden's heart?"

"Yes, I suppose so. But I am glad Elise has shown her good taste, and chosen a man who will make her as good a husband as is to be gained in all the world!"

"Ach, now, you flatter me, Lester."

"When is it to be, Max?"

"In a month's time. I have just run over to get a few things towards the furnishing—Something prettier and lighter than is to be

procured in our land. My little Elise is fond of pretty things."

Silence again, while both puffed away. Then Max Kron leant forward, and, earnestly regarding his friend, asked,—

"And the fair heiress. Is she reconciled to her fate?"

Lester Frere started, and coloured vividly.

"We have met, Max," was all he said.

"Ach!" was all the response his friend gave; then looked up eagerly for more.

"Yes, we have met," continued Lester Frere, "and I find her all that heart can wish.

But I have seen so much of women's want of faith, that I thought I would wait awhile before making myself known to my fair heiress—bride in my proper person; though Heaven knows, how hard the task has been to me!"

"And the meeting was favourable?"

"Yes. I loved her at first sight, Max; in fact, I could not help myself!"

"And she?"

Lester Frere smiled gently as he replied,—

"Well, Max, I think she would soon learn to love me."

"Ach, that is well!" said the German; then added, "But when do you meet again? and when do you mean to declare yourself to her?"

"Soon—very soon. Next week I go down to take up my abode for a short time in the neighbourhood of the old Manor House, where she is at present, and then Fate must work the rest!"

"Well, old fellow, I wish you good luck. I am sure; and when the event comes off I want you to promise to bring your bride over to the dear Fatherland, where I can promise in Elise's name, as well as my own, that she will receive a hearty welcome for her sake as well as for the sake of my good and true friend. Now I must be going, as I have made an appointment with a man who understands furniture, and so on, and he is to take me to inspect a large warehouse. So farewell, Lester, my old friend, till we meet again!"

Max Kron rose as he spoke, and held forth his hand to his companion. It was taken by the latter and clasped warmly.

"Good-bye, Max, old fellow! Remember me to Elise, and tell her I expect— But no; something may yet happen!" broke off Lester Frere.

"Come when you will, Lester. Elsie and I shall always be more than glad to welcome you," were Max Kron's final words as he turned away.

It was a twelvemonth since the day that Maude Raymond had given the sprig of stephanotis to the artist, as they stood together amid the heliotrope and tea-roses in the lawyer's spacious conservatory.

Just a twelvemonth, and neither had caught glimpse of the other since that time. Lester Dumont had left the old Manor House, and gone no one knew whither. But Mrs. Dent was not doomed to solitude again for so long; for within a fortnight of the artist's departure, Maude Raymond had declared her intention of passing some months amid scenes rendered sweet and yet sad to her at one and the same time.

Sweet, inasmuch that the presence of their late occupier seemed ever present with her as she sat with her work and books in the very room where she learnt from Mrs. Dent, the greater part of his time had been passed, even though he had been urged by her (the housekeeper) to choose a more lively aspect.

Sad, inasmuch as that the thought was a sever prevailing as his presence that he could never be more to her than a casual acquaintance. Had he himself not said it? But did not his manner, his words, imply that he wished it otherwise? Ay! there lay the secret sorrow and bitterness!

The "might have been" had crept into the girl's life, and she felt it in every pulse. Still it was something to be amid scenes rendered dearer to her since they spoke so constantly of him to her.

The days passed away.

Spring, summer, autumn, and still the beautiful heiress remained on, living her secluded life, notwithstanding all Mrs. Ellis's arguments that society would do her good. But she only smiled sadly, and said that she cared no more for the balls and parties of which she had once been the belle. She had no spirit left within her, and daily grew paler and paler, much to the consternation of those around her.

It was, as I have before remarked, just a twelvemonth from the time when they had last met Lester Dumont, and she was thinking of him deeply as she sat down in the "haunted" room, and glanced round upon the oaken wainscot.

"How I should like to see him once again!" she murmured, as her dark eyes continued to wander idly round the room.

Suddenly she started from her seat, and made her way with quick, noiseless steps to a corner of the room, where stood an old oaken table. It had been much admired by the artist, Mrs. Dent had told her, and he had always used it to put his letters and papers away in, for there were drawers in it—good old-fashioned drawers, with little brass handles to draw them out with.

The girl's first action, when she reached the table, was to bend her beautiful face down to it and lay her lips lovingly on the cold, senseless wood. Her next to quietly draw out the drawer nearest to her.

Nothing in it but a few clippings of cardboard. Closing it again she turned to the other, and opened it. Quite at the back of the drawer lay a something which gleamed white against the black wood. Putting in one hand she carefully drew forth the same, and then, crossing to the hearth, she knelt down before the blazing fire to inspect her treasure.

It was a photograph of a young girl! The colour rushed to her face as she recognized it for the same as the one she had seen in Lester Dumont's portfolio—just a year ago!

Long did she gaze at the fair, smiling face, which smiled up at her, while sad and regretful feelings surged through her brain, and a great longing arose in her heart.

"And this is the woman who has secured the prize for which I so long!" she murmured at length, as she arose and restored the laughing face to its former dark corner. Then reclosing the drawer with a deep sigh, she threw herself on a neighbouring couch, and gave vent to her feelings in a perfect flood of tears.

The night that followed was bright, clear, and frosty, on which every sound broke distinctly on the rarefied atmosphere. Mrs. Dent, the housekeeper, felt very restless. She turned and turned, hoping to thus gain sleep, but all to no purpose. The more she tossed and turned the more restless she became.

And then such thoughts would flash across her brain, the dismal tale connected with the Manor House first and foremost. And then—

What was that?

Mrs. Dent sat bolt upright in bed, and listened with all her might. The moonlight lit up her room distinctly. She glanced towards the door. That was as she had left it some hours before—closed.

She sat still, scarce daring to breathe. Five minutes passed away; and then—the sound once more—a curious, swishing sound, as though someone or something were feeling their way along by passing a hand over the papered walls. Nearer and nearer it came.

Mrs. Dent could bear the suspense no longer. So, rising from her bed, and hastily putting her feet into her slippers, and throwing a light shawl around her, she stole on tip-toe to the door, quickly and noiselessly unfastened it, and looked forth along the long corridor to her right.

What she saw made her stagger for an in-

stant, and a half-smothered exclamation of terror and alarm escaped her white and trembling lips.

Then a sudden impulse seized her, and she felt that she must follow the object so swiftly making its way down the dark corridor, and of which she could catch but the dim outline.

So, keeping well against the wall, she proceeded to walk with silent and noiseless steps. On and on went the object; and on and on followed the housekeeper till she found herself in the "haunted" chamber!

There was the ghost who, with noiseless footsteps, advanced to the fireplace.

Another instant, and the oak panel flew back, while a strong current of damp air was wafted across the room, and threw aside the light shawl which the housekeeper had thrown around her. One corner of the same was lifted high over her head in such a manner as to obscure and obstruct her gaze for an instant.

When she had removed it, the figure had disappeared, and the panel was again in its place.

Still, acting under the impulse, the housekeeper crept cautiously forth from her dark corner, and advanced into the full light of the bright moonlight and made her way towards the sliding panel.

It yielded to the pressure of her finger, and again the strong current of damp air ascended and filled the room.

But here all was dark. No sign of the ghost met her gaze.

Only after a few seconds' waiting in great fright and trepidation, and just as she was about to turn away to procure a light, a sharp and piercing scream smote on her ear.

The next instant and she had fallen senseless on the floor, while the cold current still swept on past her from the staircase leading to the subterranean passage down which the ghost had disappeared.

"And you are quite sure, Lester, that you love me for myself alone?"

"Quite sure, my darling!" was the fond answer of the man who knelt at the side of the couch whereon lay the beautiful heiress and owner of the Manor House.

"And now tell me all about it once again? It will not tire me, and I want to hear your voice, so that I may really know you are here—really yourself, and not your ghost that I forget. I must never use that word again, since poor dear Mrs. Dent was so frightened by seeing the —"

"Most beautiful ghost that it was ever anyone's fate to behold!" was added by the fond lover, as he lowered his lips to the sweet red ones that were temptingly near his own.

"No more flattery, sir; but please tell me all about it once again?"

"I obey, fair queen! You see I had with me at Briar's Farm an unfinished sketch of the old Manor House as viewed by moonlight. I longed to complete it, so I returned here yesterday for that purpose. I put up at the inn, and, after supper, made my way to the rustic bridge. It was then a quarter to ten by my watch. I placed my easel, and taking my palette, prepared to catch the moonlight effect as it brought into broad relief the stately grey pile. I worked on steadily for about two hours, when I was suddenly startled by a something white bearing down on the beech avenue. It drew nearer and nearer, till, with an unearthly screech, it disappeared behind a clump of thick bushes. I laughed softly to myself for having been so scared by a poor, harmless white owl, and sat down again to resume my painting. Just then the stable-clock struck the hour of midnight. As the last deep note died away a figure rose, as from the earth, and stood at my side. I must confess I felt frightened. Still, I had courage enough left to touch the white hand near me, and then I quickly discovered that it belonged not to the spirit world. I took the fair fingers within my own, and then looked steadily up into the face of my fair visitant. Ah! how can I describe the emotion that thrilled me as I recognized the dear

features of the only woman that I cared for on the whole earth! I gently spoke the word 'Maudie!' The dark eyes brightened with returning consciousness, the senses threw away the numbing influence of profound sleep, and with the sudden cry of fright that issued from your lips, I caught you in my arms. I re-entered at the same instant the subterranean passage. It explained everything. You had fainted; so lifting you in my arms! I bore you swiftly to the entrance-door, and rang a loud peal for admission. Mrs. Ellis herself appeared. I stayed but to see you restored to consciousness, and then departed to collect my painting materials and return to the inn. I was here early this morning to make inquiries, and I will never leave you more till you yourself speak the word that dismisses me."

"Claude, my love, my love!" was all the reply the beautiful heiress and owner of the Manor House bestowed on the handsome man at her side.

But it satisfied him. He knew by the depth of passion that rang in her voice, by the fast-filling eyes, that that word would never be spoken.

A blissful silence followed for a few instants. Then he spoke again,—

"But my darling, think of the sacrifice that you will have to make! This noble old pile!"

"My darling, I would give up all for the man I love!" was the low-spoken reply, as the girl glanced up lovingly with her dark eyes.

"My loving and noble-hearted girl! But such a sacrifice is not needed. No! Learn now that in the artist Lester Dumont you see the Lester Frere mentioned in your father's will! You are not angry with me, darling, for practising a little harmless deceit? I so wanted to feel assured that my darling loved me for myself alone, and not for the sake of retaining her ancestral home. You are not vexed, Maudie, my darling!"

"Vexed, Lester, dear? How could I be? I loved you from the first moment that I saw you; and so it little matters whether you be Lester Dumont or Lester Frere. But you are sure you loved me for myself alone?"

"Quite, my darling!"

Another tiny spell of silence. Then she asked,—

"But the photograph, Lester?"

"What photograph, dear?"

"The one in your portfolio, and the one I found in the little oaken table down in the haunted room!"

A puzzled look was on Lester Frere's face for a few moments, then quickly vanished as he turned and laid his lips on the pretty ones at his side.

"It is that of a young lady who is about to be married to an old friend of mine. I met her in Germany, and by some accident the photo which I had sent me when she became engaged to Max must have slipped in between the sketches. That is all, dear! And now, when is it to be, darling?"

"When you like, Lester," was the reply.

"Then I shall ask Mrs. Ellis to arrange everything for a speedy wedding," replied Lester Frere, as he once again bent fondly over the beautiful girl whom he was so soon to call by the sacred and sweet name of wife!

A few weeks later and Lester Frere and his loving wife were welcomed warmly by his old friend Max, who, with his pretty Elsie, do all in their power to render sweet and pleasant their stay in the dear old Fatherland.

Sometimes the fair bride's thoughts revert to the gipsy maiden's tale, and she speculates in secret (for Lester would so laugh at her, she feels assured) or her knowledge, and how it was obtained.

To us, the initiated, and who are allowed a peep behind the scenes, it is well-known that the gipsy maiden was hidden behind some dark shrubs, and from this point drank in eagerly every word of the sad tale told by Mrs. Dent to her young mistress!

[THE END.]

FACETIÆ.

THERE is one man who always draws the line somewhere, and that man is a surveyor.

CAN a man be said to have come near selling his boots when he has had them half-soled?

SUSIE: "I wouldn't be in your shoes, Jane, on any account." Jane: "And I wouldn't have you; you'd stretch 'em all out of shape."

WHY is a room full of married people like an empty room? Because there isn't a single person in it.

A BUTCHER said of a rival in business: "He's a nice chap, he is. He's always ready to customers half-weight!"

A YANKEE doctor being asked to purchase a bicycle, said: "No, I thank you. I'd as soon walk afoot as ride afoot."

No matter how selfish a doctor may be, he is always a man of feeling. He invariably feels the pulse of his patients.

THE fast mail trains are generally popular, but the female trains are usually so slow and far behind that they are very unpopular.

"How are you getting on at school?" asked a parent of his somewhat indolent son. "I got kept in again to-day." "What about?" "About two hours and a half."

FIRST CITIZEN (at a monster meeting in Union Square): "Is your watch going, sir?" Second Citizen: "Yes; I expect it is," feeling in his pocket. "In fact, it's gone!"

A YOUNG man having remarked that the sight of certain fruit made his mouth water, an old toper who stood by exclaimed: "Well! ef there's anything that'll make my mouth water, I don't want to see it!"

A LAWYER, whose team was running away, called vehemently to his coachman to hold the horses up. "I can't do it, sir," shouted the coachman, "Then run into something cheap," cried the lawyer.

"Don't say pitch darkness," said a Boston girl to her little brother. "What shall I say, then?" asked the boy. "Say 'bituminous obscurity,' or something else elegant," replied the cultured young lady.

"HALLO! Where are you going? Don't go up there; it's dangerous." "What is the matter?" "They're going to blast up in the quarry in a few minutes." "Well, there isn't any danger. I see a policeman up there; and if there was any danger he wouldn't be there."

MRS. RASPER (to her family physician): "Do you think, Doctor, that a little temper is a bad thing in a woman?" Physician (galantly): "Certainly not, madam; certainly not. On the contrary, it is a good thing, and she should take care never to lose it."

PEDESTRIAN (on whose shoulder a brick had fallen as he was passing a new building): "Hi! up there! You are dropping bricks down here!" Bricklayer (cheerfully): "All right! You needn't take the trouble to bring them up!"

THE father-in-law of a newly-married man found him purchasing a piano for his young wife, and reminded him that she didn't play that instrument, whereupon the affectionate husband exclaimed: "Don't you suppose I know that? If she could play, do you suppose I would give her a piano?"

"A BOY assassin hanged," were the words that Mr. Boker read from the paper, and he added, in a growling tone: "Served him right." "Why, Jacob!" exclaimed his kind-hearted wife; "how can you say so? Assassin's boy is a great trial, but I don't think he ought to be hanged for it."

A NUMBER of college students having been hauled up before the faculty for fighting, the president said to them: "Young gentlemen, our business here is to fight with our heads, and not with our fists." At this a student, who stammered, exclaimed: "Bu-but, you s-s-ses, but-but butting ain't allow low-loved among gent-gentlemen."

SOCIETY.

MR. AND MRS. REGINALD NORTHALL-LAWRIE very recently celebrated their "sin" wedding, and gave a reception at their residence in Cranley Gardens, which was fully and fashionably attended.

The drawing-rooms were decorated with red and gold Japanese chrysanthemums, massed in blue china vases and bowls, and the coming Christmaside was brought under the more immediate notice of the guests by the banks of berry-laden holly and dark spruce fir, which were placed in the corners of the rooms. Mrs. Northall-Lawrie received her friends before the entrance to the conservatory, which was gaily illuminated. At the farther end was exhibited a clever painting of her two elder children, clad in quaint costume of Charles I. period, and stepping the stately minuet—this, a "surprise" present from the hostess to her husband, and the work of Mr. Horner, was deservedly admired. The two children, who presented the rather original programmes to the guests as they arrived, were dressed in the costumes in which they were depicted on canvas, the girl in white pearl-trimmed brocade and pale blue satin, the boy in black velvet and cream.

Many of the toilettes worn by the guests were handsome. The hostess wore a lovely robe à la Watteau of blush rose satin and crêpe de chine, with panels of soft-toned brocade; the bodice had quaintly-shaped sleeves of satin and gathered crêpe, and the folds of crêpe edging the square-cut bodice were held in place by crescents and stars of diamonds.

A gown of white satin was draped with gold lace, fastened with bouquets of natural violets; and one of vieux rose faille, with moss-green stripes, had a front of rich gold embroidery and glittering beetles' wings.

The music was beautifully rendered under the direction of Mr. John Thomas, whose "band of harps" was somewhat of a novelty in the matter of drawing-room concerts. The vocalists, Miss Eleanor Rees and Mr. Dyved Lewis (Mrs. Edith Wynne was unable to appear through indisposition) were both at their best.

The Duchess of Albany opened the new institute which has been erected by public subscriptions at Slough, and named the Leopold Institute, after the late Duke of Albany. The ceremony took place on Tuesday, December 6, and a bazaar was held on that and the following day. The building contains a lecture hall, friendly societies' rooms, and reading rooms.

The Queen of Sweden continues to improve, and is, in spite of the wintry weather, able to take almost daily riding or driving exercise. The King of Sweden generally visits the Queen three times a week at Ulrikedal, where Her Majesty's stay may be further prolonged.

The Viceroy and Lady Dufferin, with Sir F. Roberts, Gen. Ellis, Adjutant-General Sir Theodore Hope, and Mr. Darand, Foreign Secretary, have paid a flying visit to Quetta. They travelled up the Lurna line. Lady Dufferin went straight to Quetta. The rest of the party, with Sir O. St. John, went on to Gulsitan, and rode to the summit of the Khojak Pass. Lord Dufferin reached Quetta, and, after a drive round the place next morning, returned to India via the Bolan. At the railway station he received an address in Persian from the principal Afghan and Belooch residents. The Viceroy replied briefly in the same language. On returning from Quetta, the members of the Viceroy's party proceeded to Dera-Ghazi-Khan, whence they were to keep along the frontier to Peshawar, where a grand durbur was to be held.

SIR HENRY AND LADY TICHBORNE have been entertaining their first house party at Tichborne Park, Alresford, Hampshire. Great alterations are being made at Tichborne, and more rooms are being opened up.

STATISTICS.

THERE are now 28,000 less Irish soldiers in the British army than there were twenty years ago. Englishmen have taken their places.

THE statistics of immigration compiled at Castle Garden, New York, show that the total number of persons landed during the month of October was 30,882, which is just thirty-seven less than for the same period last year, but does not include the one thousand immigrants on the two cholera ships *Alesia* and *Britannia*, who were detained at quarantine. The total immigration through Castle Garden for the year 1887 thus far has been 331,585, which is 72,073 ahead of the corresponding period of last year.

ONE of our highest authorities says that the total annual income of England is £1,300,000,000. Two hundred and twenty thousand families possess property to the fabulous value of £6,000,000,000. Eight thousand landlords receive in rents £35,000,000. The rents of five hundred peers amount to £12,000,000. Thirty-five thousand persons practically hold the whole soil as against a population of 35,000,000. And while this is so, the producers exist miserably from day to day. They starve in the midst of plenty.

GEMS.

If you would find a great many faults, be on the look-out; but if you want to find them in unlimited quantities, be on the look-in.

WE are at best but stewards of what we falsely call our own; yet avarice is so insatiable that it is not in the power of liberality to contest it.

BACON bids us read not to contradict and refute, or to believe and take for granted, or to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and to consider.

THERE are some faults slight in the sight of love, some errors slight in the estimate of wisdom; but truth forgives no insult, and endures no stain.

How can you learn self-knowledge? Never by meditation, but best by action. Try to do your duty, and you will soon find what you are worth. What is your duty? The exigency of the day.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

PARTRIDGE PUDDING.—Skin a brace of birds, cut them into comely pieces, put them, with a few mushrooms, into a basin lined with suet paste; add a couple of shalots, and some minced parsley. Season with pepper and salt; put in a very little stock or water, cover up the pudding, tie it up in a cloth, and boil it for about three hours.

APPLES IN SYRUP.—Pare and core as many apples as you wish to preserve (hard apples are the best). Then throw them into a basin of water. Clarify as much loaf sugar as will cover the apples, and lay them into the syrup (when boiled enough), and let them simmer (not boil) till they are quite clear. Care must be taken not to let the apples break. When they are done sufficiently, put them into jars carefully, and pour the syrup over them, and when cold tie them down with paper, and brush over with the white of an egg. To clarify the sugar, take a little gum arabic and a little isinglass dissolved in hot water, pour it when dissolved into the sugar (to every pound of which you put half a pint of water) when it is boiling, and it will clear all the sediment to the top of the pan, which you must skim off as soon as it rises. Loaf sugar may also be cleared with the white of an egg. When clarifying sugar, great care must be taken to skim it as fast as the scum rises. A little lemon essence is a great improvement.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE man who wishes to help the world must bear a part in its interests and occupations.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH asked a favour of Queen Elizabeth, which he frequently did, to which she replied, "Raleigh, when will you leave off begging?" "When your Majesty leaves off giving," he replied. "So long must we continue to pray."

To suffer in patience the crosses which we cannot understand, the thwartings which seem to have no end or aim, the humiliations that seem but to break and scatter the spiritual mood of the soul—to thus endure is to offer the best the soul can give.

CHARITY should be done wisely and judiciously, not taken up as a mere passing craze and fashion, to be worn and laid aside, after being displayed to the eyes of the world, as one lays aside last year's bonnet and gown as being no longer "the thing."

ALL admit that a miser is not right to hoard his gold in a box when he might so invest it as to add to the welfare of multitudes. But every one does the same thing practically who holds in his own possession anything from which he cannot or does not extract the value, thereby rendering it useless.

THERE is something even better than success within the reach of each of us, and that is the consciousness of having manfully striven, in spite of untoward circumstances, faithfully and cheerfully to do our duty in that state of life in which a merciful Providence has cast our lot. This involves patience and endurance, courage and forbearance, and affords numberless opportunities for the exercise of true heroism.

It is alike dishonest and disgraceful to contract unnecessary debt without the means of discharging it. Friendly cordiality should be extended to the man who chooses to eat plain food, to wear a coarse garb, and to live in a humble home that is truly his own, because honestly paid for, rather than to him who lives softly and delicately and is surrounded by beauty and art, while he postpones his payments, eludes his debts, and lives, a servile dependent on charity, or the indulgence or patience of his creditors.

The process of making the wood carpet now coming into common use is comparatively simple, although it must be done with exactitude. Carefully adjusted saws strip the lumber into the desired thickness and width, the latter differing according to the work required. The stuff is then subjected to the saws that cut it out in the proper shape for inlaying, to form the fabric and figure of the carpet. This must be done with much particularity, as each of the multifarious pieces must exactly fit. The arrangement of the pieces and the gluing of them is done by boys, and looks like slow work, but yards are thus woven with fair celerity. Canvas is glued on one side to give strength to the fabric. The carpet is then subjected to sandpaper, and is finally finished with hard oil.

DISHONESTY in all its forms certainly inflicts much suffering upon those who are cheated, but it also reacts with force upon the knave. Not only does he suffer the remorse of his own conscience and risk the penalties of the law, he must also resign the confidence and respect of his fellow-men; he must submit to be always suspected, always distrusted, always watched. What he has acquired wrongfully is apt to be held loosely or parted with easily. The same tricks that he has used, and perhaps sharper ones, will be used against him, and the general feeling of distrust which he has engendered will in many ways injure him and baffle his endeavours. This is true in many cases, from the petty meanness which would steal a tram fare or take advantage of a mistake in change, up to the deliberate and wholesale perfidy that speculates on trust-funds or swindles a corporation.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

N. V.—Salon is a French word, and is pronounced *so-lon*.

M. W.—Oil is sometimes used in storms at sea to calm the waters about the vessel.

G. H.—We do not know of a play on the subject mentioned, but there may be one.

S. C.—Use black in your correspondence. Your writing indicates an amiable character.

L. L.—We cannot recommend patent medicines of any kind. We advise you to consult a doctor.

W. T.—The name of the lady who writes under the pseudonym of "The Duchess" is Mrs. Argles.

L. L.—Dr. Talmage's church in Brooklyn, U.S., was destroyed by fire and rebuilt about sixteen years ago.

F. F. C.—With light hair and blue eyes and fair complexion you are blonde. Your handwriting indicates an amiable disposition.

E. T. M.—A girl of fifteen is too young to engage in sentimental correspondence. Do not write love-letters until you are engaged.

H. N.—There is no quoted premium on your coin. It may be worth something, nevertheless, if you can find a collector who wants it.

G. S. D.—It is impossible for us to tell what the writer had in view in the inscription inclosed in your letter. It is evidently incomplete.

H. R.—Very old grease stains can seldom be removed from writing-paper, and it is more troublesome than efficacious to make the attempt.

N. S. B.—Dark-brown eyes and hair entitle you to the name of brunette. Your writing indicates, more than anything else, extreme youth.

C. C.—Do not complain of your beau to those who have no sympathy with you. Lover's troubles are not regarded very seriously by their friends.

R. S. H.—You must control your temper and avoid all appearance of flirting, or you will lose your beau. Ill-temper no man worth having will long abide.

B. B.—July 9th, 1869, fell on Sunday, October 13th, 1849, on Saturday. Your writing indicates an easy and confiding disposition, and a tendency to indolence.

S. N. F.—Neatness and precision are the traits most indicated by your writing. The hair is a shade of brown, and would go well with eyes of either brown, blue or grey.

L. C.—If you can take the commercial course at the high school you had better do so. It is not absolutely necessary that you should take it to become a book-keeper.

J. S. C.—Advertise in the London daily papers stating that something to his advantage may be learned by communicating with some one whom you can trust to assist you.

C. R. D.—We cannot recommend those medicines, as we know nothing about them. In general it is better to consult a good physician in preference to taking specifics of any kind.

M. A.—You will grow older very rapidly, and you have plenty of time in which to think of beaus and marriage. We advise you not to provoke your friends needlessly. Take your mother's advice.

F. S. D.—Any young man who offers himself to three girls at once is not worth having. Do not quarrel about such a frivolous youth. He probably has nothing, and no intention of marrying either of you. Always remember that marriage implies support for a family.

E. F. W.—If you have an opportunity learn both type-writing and telegraphy, as they are both useful and easily acquired. The salaries paid are not very remunerative, but a good telegraph operator can generally find paying employment. Your penmanship is not very good, and you should strive to improve it.

S. N. N.—Some girls are well grown at fifteen. Others do not get their growth until they are twenty. It depends altogether upon hereditary influences and circumstances. You write very nicely, and your writing shows a careful and good disposition. Your mother is the best adviser and judge of your associates and habits.

LAURENCE.—No wise woman will marry a man without he has some means of supporting a family. To propose to a young lady when out of employment is very silly and wrong. Do not seek to win the hand of the woman you love until your fortunes mend. It is no excuse to offer that she may accept another unless you propose now. Perhaps she may be happier with another than with you.

ROSE says she is very unhappy. For six years she has had to make her own way in the world and take care of her old mother. She has a lover, who is good to her, and sometimes she cares for him, at others she cannot endure his presence. She has, also, a good home, but she feels as though her life lacked something. If you are living virtuously, taking care of your mother and have a good home and a constant lover you have many reasons to be happy. You need more resources within yourself. You have had, you say, no education and no opportunity to acquire one. It is not too late. Study, read, and improve yourself; make this an object. You are young, and have many years before you. Don't brood over past mistakes or present deficiencies. Try to make the future redeem the past.

M. S. W.—Catarrh can be cured if remedies are applied in time.

F. P.—We cannot give the address of any physician even if you send real name and address.

F. C.—These arts of flirtation are very unbecom'g, as it is very indiscreet to notice a stranger in any way.

A. L. C.—You are of the average height and weight, and have no reason to be dissatisfied. You are a brunette.

T. M. E.—Seven years is not too great a difference in the ages of persons who wish to marry, if the difference is on the man's side.

H. M.—The lottery may not be a fraud, but it is not once in ten thousand times that you can draw a prize. Don't risk good money in such concerns.

ENO.—We cannot tell about a drama written on the incidents mentioned until we should see the drama. We do not publish plays, and do not attempt to publish or criticise them.

D. G.—Do not marry any one until you are sure of loving. When you are through with your school life, it will be time enough for you to vex yourself with love affairs.

Y. M.—We can safely advise you to offer yourself to the young lady, and if she accepts you, marry as soon as you are both ready. Do not be foolishly over-confident. It is a sign of youth and inexperience.

P. N. S.—You are tall for one of your age, and about the right weight for one of your height. Your mother is the best judge of the proper length of your dresses. Use glycerine and rose-water as a wash for the hands.

WHAT IS LOVE?

What is love, do you ask me?
Oh, how can I tell?
It is bliss, it is rapture,
An exquisite spell.
It will find you and bind you,
Both maiden and man,
And fill you and thrill you
As nothing else can.
'Twill possess you unbidden,
Nor leave you when children;
The frowns of cold reason 'twill lightly ignore.
You may vow to disown it,
And think you've outgrown it;
Then find, with a start
And a throb of the heart,
Its fetters still bind you as much as before.
How comes it? you ask me.
Oh, how can I say?
In a word, or a touch,
Or a smile by the way;
Or perchance a shy glance
From a merry bright eye
Sends the dart to your heart;
Or it may be a sigh
From a breast that in sorrow
Your pity would borrow,
In answering sigh all your sympathies move,
And you pity—ah, yes!
What kind heart could do less?
So you're drawn to your fate,
Till some day, when too late,
You find that your pity has ended in love.
H. A. C.

M. N.—Frederick Archer, the famous jockey, died at Newmarket, Nov. 8, 1886. While in a delirium caused by typhoid fever he shot himself with a revolver. He was born in 1856. He began riding at the age of ten, and accumulated a considerable fortune.

CONSTANT READER (choose a more original name, please).—The gentleman who held your hands fast and kissed you, in spite of your struggles, because you had said he dared not do this, showed little respect for you and very ill-breeding. Let him see that you resent the liberty. A correspondence with a man reported to be "fast" will be apt to cause you regret. You can never be sure that such a man will not speak lightly of you and boast of you as one of his conquests. Your height and size make you one of the petite girls. Don't worry about your smallness. The old song says:

"The world wags in the little woman's way."

Your writing is good; one word you misspell—"proper."

R. G. C.—1. The vessels engaged in laying the Atlantic cable to which you refer were the *Great Eastern*, the screw-steamers *Medway* and *Albany*, and the Government war steamer *Terrible*. 2. The cable required, in addition to the somewhat more than 1,000 miles in length remaining from that of 1865, was completed early in May, 1866. It had for a conductor a copper strand of seven wires, six laid around one. Weight, 300 lbs. per nautical mile. It was embedded for solidity in Chatterton's compound. The insulator was four layers of gutta-percha, laid on alternately, with thinner layers of Chatterton's compound. Weight, 400 lbs. per nautical mile. The outer coat was ten solid wires galvanized, each wire surrounded separately with five strands of white Manila yarn, and the whole laid spirally around the core, which had previously been padded with a serving of tarred hemp. The breaking strain was 8 tons 2 cwt., and it was capable of bearing its own weight in 12 miles' depth of water. This length of cable was 2,730 nautical miles, part of which was used for completing the cable which parted in 1865. Since the completion of this cable, others have been successfully laid, and telegraphic communication goes on uninterrupted.

C. H.—As you admit that you were to blame for the lovers' quarrel, in fact treated your betrothed shamefully, why not tell him so as frankly as you have told us, and see if confession will not quickly win forgiveness?

C. W. A.—To make a cauliflower omelet, take the white part of a boiled cauliflower after it is cold; chop it very small, and mix with it a sufficient quantity of well-beaten egg to make a very thick batter. Then fry it in fresh butter in a small pan, and send it hot to table.

B. B.—Some warts can be removed permanently by cutting off and touching with caustic, other obstinate cases require to have the root loosened, if not pulled out, as you would a tooth. The old-fashioned plan of trying a coarse hair around the wart sometimes causes them to drop off.

DRBSA.—Proper names are pronounced differently by different individuals. The French pronounce *Maurice* *mau-reece*, the English and Americans often pronounce it *mor-ree*. Each individual can pronounce his name to please himself, and in his case it will be the correct pronunciation.

G. C. W.—It was in the autumn of 1871 that the Prince of Wales was seized with typhoid fever. Public bulletins were frequently issued during his illness, and great anxiety prevailed throughout England. His convalescence was celebrated at St. Paul's Cathedral, London, February 27, 1872.

ARIANA.—The preacher probably can judge of the qualifications of the young lady for a wife as well or better than we can; but we scarcely think that one answering your description would be suitable for him. Young ladies change after marriage as they grow older and take on responsibilities.

LOTTA.—There is no situation in life that may not be borne, provided you have a good conscience and a sufficiency of food and clothing, and for any one in your situation to despair and go into a decline is very silly and wicked. You should assist your mother, and work off your misery on the sewing-machine.

T. L. W.—A marriage under a fictitious name is legal, provided you can prove the marriage by competent witnesses. It is a very foolish thing to marry under a fictitious name. You will inherit your share of your parents' estate, no matter what change you may have made in your name. Your writing indicates truthfulness.

D. C. F.—The handkerchief is now worn like a corsage bouquet and peeping out of the waistcoat or jacket pocket, or tucked into the belt or sash. Fancy handkerchiefs come in new shades of red, blue and heliotrope, with the initials or monogram embroidered in the corner in white. All sorts of fancy coloured borders appear on the new handkerchiefs. It is best not to try any handkerchief flirtations with young men who are acquainted with you.

G. A.—Alto-relievo is a term designating that species of sculpture in which the figure stands completely out from the ground, being attached to it only in some places, and in others worked entirely round like single statues. The largest work ever executed in alto-relievo is said to be that by Algardi in St. Peter's at Rome, representing the repulse of Attila by St. Peter and St. Paul. The word is also written *alto-relievo*, and is pronounced *al-to-re-lo-vo*, the accent on the last syllable but one.

E. G. W.—1. The name albino was first given by the Portuguese to the native whites on the coast of Africa. 2. The skin and hair of the human albino are of a dull, milky white, and some parts of the eye are deep red. 3. The name is now applied to animals, birds, and insects, as the white elephant, white mouse, white crow, and white blackbird. 4. According to Humboldt, albinos are more common among natives of dark skin and inhabiting hot climates. 5. Albinos are most generally of the male sex. 6. It is not understood to what cause the phenomenon is to be attributed.

E. D. F.—The Bartholdi Statue of Liberty in New York Harbour measures 151 feet 1 inch from the bottom of the plinth to the tip of the torch flame, and stands 305 feet 11 inches above low water mark. The forefinger of the figure's right hand is over 7 feet long and over 4 feet in circumference at the second joint. It is the largest work of the kind ever completed. The Colossus at Rhodes could not possibly have had the shape and size attributed to it. The statue of *Armenius* in Bavaria is about 94 feet in height; that of St. Charles Borromeo in Lake Maggiore, 75 feet; the Virgin of Puy 52 feet, and the statue of *Bavaria* 51 feet. It is a typified figure of a graceful, deep-browed woman, stately, clear-eyed, wise, and prudent like the Minerva of the Greeks.

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